

SECTION 5 **RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Catawba County, City of Hickory, and City of Newton provide the majority of parks, recreation, and public open space for the County and surrounding communities. Many of the park and recreation needs are being met by local municipalities and non-profit facilities within the County which provide a wealth of active recreation facilities such as athletic fields, athletic programs and recreation centers. However, these facilities do not provide an abundance of passive recreation.

Park/open space needs are directly influenced by the expectations of the residents of Catawba County and related to the 'quality of life' to which they aspire. In general, this Master Plan addresses parks and recreation facilities, both active and passive which are available all residents, but the plan specifically deals with the passive recreation component offered by the County. Catawba County Parks Division aspires to provide quality passive recreation opportunities that complement and expand outdoor activity choices rather than duplicate the active opportunities already provided by others. This Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan will be used as a guide for improving recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

Section 4 of this Master Plan inventories Catawba County's park facilities, and recreation facilities within the County School System, non-profits, and local municipalities. The inventory includes available amenities within each park, to better understand existing recreation opportunities. Demographic and population trends found in Section 2 show anticipated growth in the County for the next 10 years. Data is grouped by Catawba County Small Area Plan (SAP) boundaries since the adopted SAPs have established priorities promoting parks/recreational and open space amenities.

The updated Master Plan uses community input obtained through public forums and surveys to understand current recreational priorities. Attitude changes acknowledging the need for physical activity, awareness to preserve and learn about the environment, beneficial stress relief offered by the outdoor experience, changes in the economy, demographics, and overall 'quality of life' are relevant in recreational expectations. In depth data that was gained from the forums and surveys is included in this Section.

Chart 5.1.1 below indicates that most patrons (44.0%) use Riverbend Park for hiking or walking. Adding this percentage with the group who comes to walk with their dogs (8.0%) shows a wellness walking/hiking demand of 52%.

Chart 5.1.1 Riverbend Park Usage

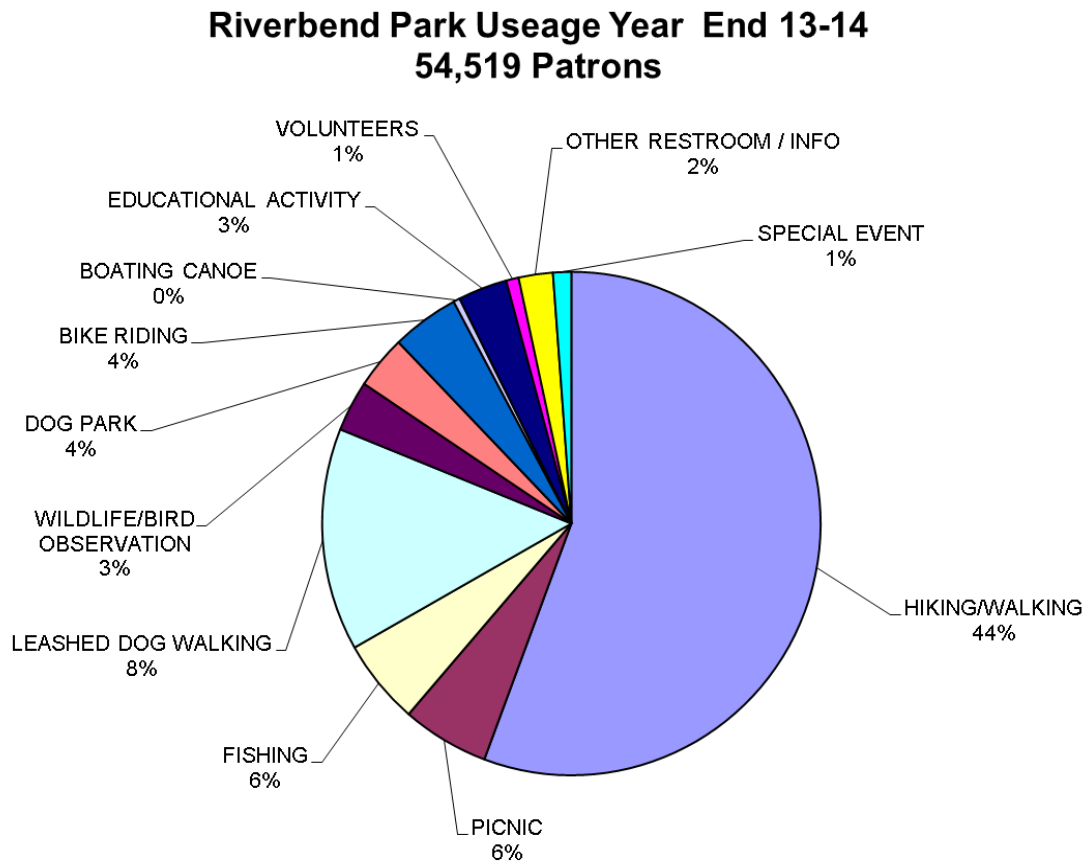


Chart 5.1.2 below indicates that most patrons (45.0%) use Bakers Mountain Park for hiking. Adding this percentage with the group who used the walking/running paved trail (8.0%), and leash walked their dogs (12.0%) shows a wellness walking/hiking demand of 65%.

Chart 5.1.2 Bakers Mountain Park Usage

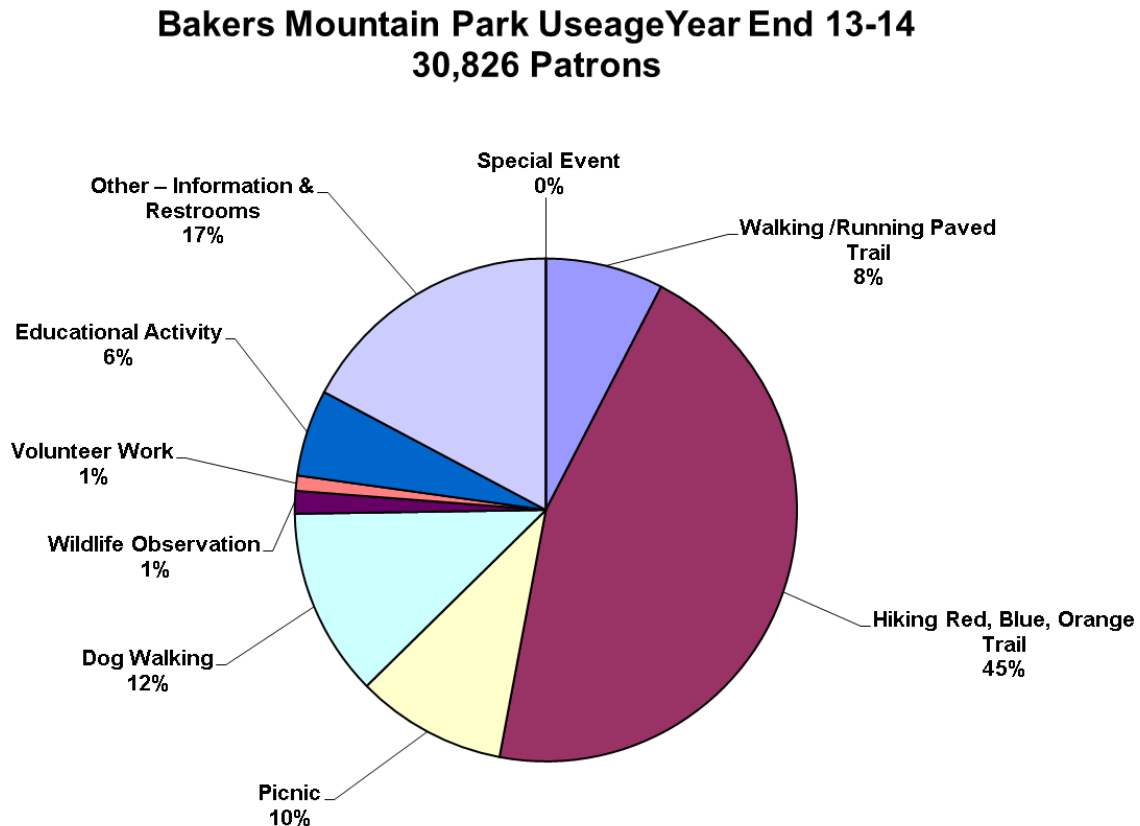
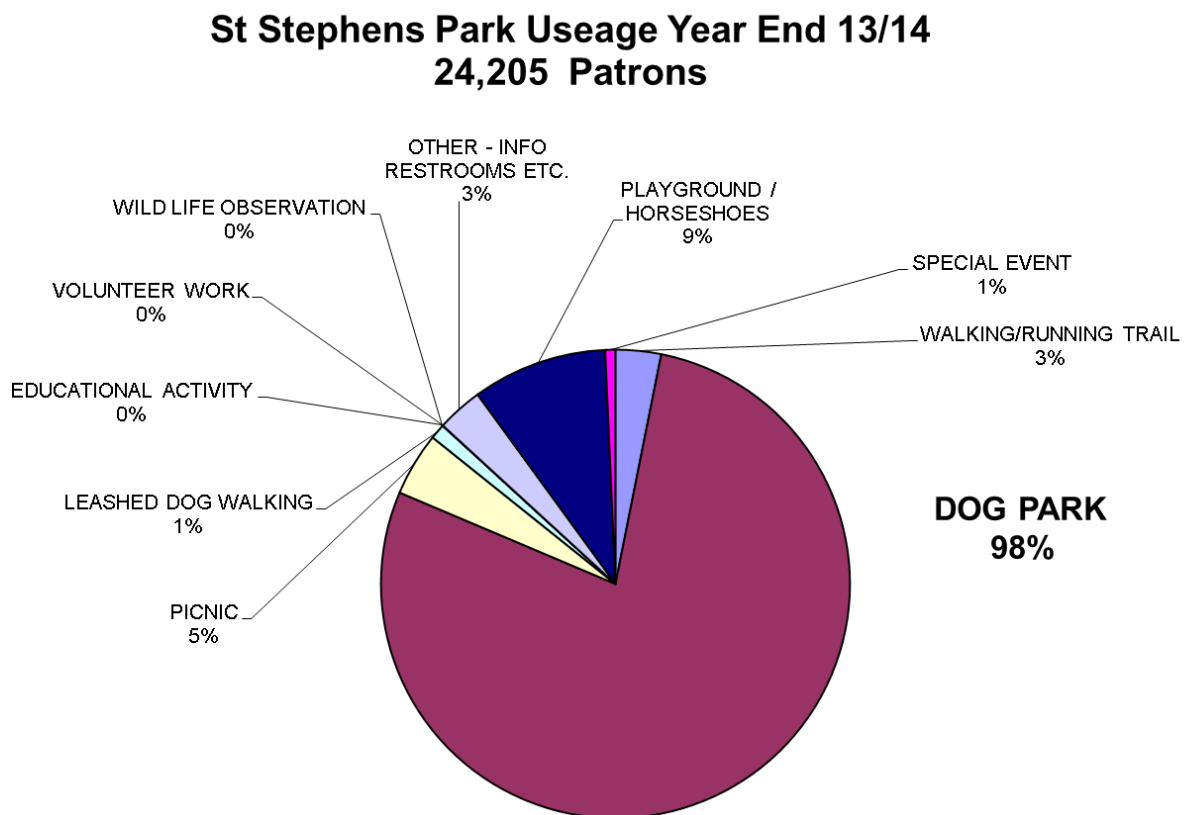


Chart 5.1.3 below indicates that most patrons (98.0%) use St. Stephens Park for playing with their dogs in the dog park and socializing. In addition, 1% used the park for leashed dog walking. Approximately 3% of the patrons used the park for playground or walking physical activities.

Chart 5.1.3 St. Stephens Park Usage



Parks Advisory Committee (PAC)

The Parks Advisory Committee was established to act as representatives of the residents of Catawba County. Their mission is to assist and provide input to the County on improvements that would improve the Catawba County Parks. The Committee is comprised of County residents of diverse backgrounds (age, ethnicity, affiliations and gender) that live throughout the County. Meetings are conducted on a quarterly basis, with several additional meetings conducted throughout the Master Plan updating process.

During the Master Plan updating process, the Parks Advisory Committee had several workshops to determine objectives of the Parks Master Plan, create a survey, determine open house formats, dates and locations and develop “choice sheets” which were used at the forums to gather input. PAC workshops were held on 10/1/13, 11/5/13, 12/3/13, 2/4/14. A special meeting was held on 4/16/14 to view survey results prior to the final public forum. Another special meeting was held on 6/18/14 to discuss the draft Plan and make any additional revisions. The PAC was actively involved in the Parks Master Plan update by advertising and hosting public input sessions, speaking with attendees to glean information during those forums, creating and distributing surveys, and analyzing results and comments from County residents. On 10/8/14, the Parks Advisory Committee met to make final revisions and recommended the Plan to the Planning Board to recommend adoption to the Board of Commissioners.

5.2 PUBLIC INPUT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The methodology used in updating the Comprehensive Parks Master Plan was primarily based on citizen input. The following methods were used to obtain community insight for this Master Plan:

- Master Plan input from the Parks Advisory Committee;
- Community open-house drop-in sessions; and
- Community survey.

Community Meetings and Surveys

The results of the Catawba County Comprehensive Parks Master Plan are based on the following discovery methods: 1) a review of the study area, which is within the County limits, 2) analysis of the existing parks and facilities based on community input; and 3) community input to determine needs. The Catawba County Comprehensive Parks Master Plan is action-oriented and serves as a tool in the improvement and enhancement of the Parks.

Surveys and public forum flyers were distributed by Parks Advisory Committee members to their local neighborhoods, churches, workplaces, libraries, civic organizations and local businesses. A total of 655 completed surveys were received. Four community open house sessions were held to gather input, with one additional forum to present the survey and input session results and give the public another opportunity for comment. The four public input sessions were held from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm, at separate locations throughout the County, making attendance convenient for residents' busy schedules. The following table shows the dates, locations, and number of attendees at each open house.

Table 5.2.1 –Dates, Locations, and Attendance for Public Forums

| Date | Location | Attendance |
|-------------|---|-------------------|
| 2/18/14 | • Mountain View Southwest Library | 46 |
| 2/25/14 | • Catawba County Gov. Center, Newton | 41 |
| 2/27/14 | • Highland Recreation Center, Hickory | 27 |
| 3/5/14 | • Sherrills Ford-Terrell Fire & Rescue | 34 |
| 4/22/14 | • Catawba County Gov. Center, Newton – Review of results | 13 |
| | Total Attendance | 161 |

The forums were advertised through area newspapers (Charlotte Observer, Hickory Daily Record, Observer News Enterprise); the County public e-newsletter; the County employee newsletter; County, Planning and Parks website pages; County and Parks social media; and e-mail blasts to County employees. In addition, introductory phone calls were made to area non-profit group officers which were followed up with e-mail “press releases” and flyers which the organizations sent to their members. Members, in-turn forwarded the information to their families, friends and contacts. These non-profit groups included: Lions Club, Garden Club, Friends of the Library, Rotary Club, and Optimist Club.

Parks Advisory Committee members took several hard copies of the advertising flyer and posted them at businesses in their areas of residence. They also forwarded electronic copies to their own membership organizations, contacts, friends, and family to invite and encourage them to attend the public forums.

Large maps were displayed at each public forum showing:

- County Park Locations;
- Service Areas of Each Existing and Proposed Park;
- Carolina Thread Trail/Duke Relicensing/Agri-Tourism sites;
- Countywide Public Parks and Recreation Facilities with Amenities; and
- Churches.

Attendees were encouraged to mark up these maps to add any information they felt pertinent, and indicate which churches had recreational amenities.

In addition to the maps were large “choice sheets”—one for each park—containing a list of amenities that were already in the park and others that were not in the park. The sheets were posted on the walls at the open houses, and each participant was given six dots which were to be placed on the amenities they felt were most important. It seemed probable that people would attend the public session located closest to where they live, and would also most likely use the park closest to their homes. Therefore, the dots were color coded for each session. Red dots were used for the public forum at Mountain View Branch Library; green for Catawba County Government Center; yellow for Highland Recreation Center; and blue for the Sherrills Ford-Terrell Fire & Rescue location. This information will help in the decision process when deciding which projects should be contemplated at individual parks.

To gather more in-depth data from both park users and non-park users, a survey was created. Each forum participant was encouraged to fill out a survey while at the forum, and take hard copies for other family members. A handout was also given to each attendee with the web address to follow the progress of the plan, advertise the date of a fifth open house to view data from the four input sessions, and preview the recommendations of the draft plan. This survey was made available on-line after the public forums took place, and was advertised as a second event, in the same manner as the open house sessions were promoted which included local newspaper ads and local non-profit e-mails, County e-newsletters, and surveys distributed by Parks Advisory Committee members in their local neighborhoods, churches, workplaces, libraries, civic organizations, businesses, friends and family.

5.3 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – COMMUNITY MEETINGS

The Parks Advisory Committee (PAC) had several workshops to determine objectives for the Parks Master Plan, create a survey, determine open house formats, dates and locations, and develop “choice sheets” which were to be used at the forums to gather input. PAC workshops were held on 10/1/13, 11/5/13, 12/3/13, 2/4/14. A special meeting was held on 4/16/14 to view survey results prior to the final public forum. Another special meeting was held on 6/18/14 to discuss the draft Plan and make any additional revisions. PAC members were involved throughout the process in distributing flyers and surveys and attending all public forums. On 10/8/14, the Parks Advisory Committee met to make final revisions and recommended the Plan to the Planning Board and Board of Commissioners for adoption. The Planning Board voted unanimously to recommend the plan to the Board of Commissioners on 10/27/14. The Board of Commissioners unanimously adopted the Plan on 5/18/15.

The forums were advertised through area newspapers, County e-newsletters, the County, Planning, and Parks website pages, social media, and e-mail “press releases” to non-profit groups including: Lions Club, Garden Club, Friends of the Library, Rotary Club, and Optimist Club.

Flyers advertising the public forums were distributed by Parks Advisory Committee members to local neighborhoods, churches, workplaces, libraries, civic organizations, local businesses and personal contacts. Four community open house sessions were held to gather input, with one additional forum to present the survey and input session results and give the public another opportunity for comment. A total of 161 people attended.

Large maps were displayed featuring a variety of issues. Attendees were encouraged to mark up these maps and add any information they felt pertinent. They were also asked to indicate which churches had recreational amenities.

In addition to the maps were large “choice sheets”—one for each park—containing a list of amenities that were already in the park and others that were not in the park. Participants were asked to indicate their favorite current amenities and others they would like added to each park. As expected, people generally chose amenities in the park closest to where they lived. Some participants placed all their dots on a single amenity.

Choice Sheet Analysis

An analysis was done from the “choice sheets” for the park system overall, and also for each individual park. Generally throughout the park system, participants wanted the parks to operate on a six-day per week schedule and requested more

trails, both natural and paved, and additional trail maintenance. Water access and picnic facilities were highly desired. Primitive camping was requested in several parks as there is currently no place where groups could camp in Catawba County.

People wanted the facilities necessary to conduct both environmental and historical programming along with proper interpretive signage. Catawba County's mission is to provide passive recreation to augment, and not duplicate active amenities already provided by the municipalities and non-profits. As such, the County's needs analysis looks at passive and educational options that enhance citizen's quality of life. Examination of the amenities chosen revealed the following more in-depth data:

Catawba County Park System – Overall Public Input Summary

The public open house forums and surveys revealed the following data and comments:

- Most people come to the parks for the outdoor experience and exercise/wellness opportunities;
- Operate on a six-day week schedule, and be staffed during open hours to enhance both safety and park maintenance. Fewer days of access impedes visitor's daily health hiking routines, the ability of schools to use parks, and loses competitive points under the grant programs. Hikers and dog park patrons appreciate staff for safety reasons;
- Favorite amenities were trails, with canoeing/kayaking, educational events, and picnicking also important;
- Improve existing trails;
- Add more trails;
- Expand park acreage when beneficial to park activities and natural habitats;
- Expand picnic and sitting areas;
- Add primitive camping to one or more parks;
- Add a community meeting/education center at Bakers Mountain and other sites as appropriate;
- Develop an expanded consistent schedule of guided environmental education programs for individuals and families. Invite elementary schools to have a park visit on the curriculum and use parks as outdoor labs for science and history classes;
- Add events featuring music, astronomy, art, and physical fitness sessions in the parks;
- Add mileage markers and identify the difficulty of park trails as severe, moderate, or easy to help the user determine the route that best matches their objective;
- Increase interpretative signage to identify environmental, natural, or historical features;

- Continue to purpose and implement innovative concepts to help the park system provide health, educational, and economic benefits;
- Continue to enhance partnerships, and approach new potential partners to create mutually beneficial outcomes. Ex. CVCC, LR, Science Center, Elementary Schools;
- Bunker Hill was chosen more often as the higher priority in the development of future parks; and
- A park is needed in the southeast area of the County.

The following breakdowns for each park details the citizen input data gathered and also a joint staff/Parks Advisory Committee (PAC) summary recommendation derived from citizen input and issues brought forth by staff and PAC members.

Riverbend Park

Staff/PAC Recommendation Summary

- Renovate existing facilities and infrastructure to include the river overlook deck; parking/asphalt repair; entrance sign maintenance; informational sign replacement for consistency; painting, floor covering, fixtures, and roof replacement for office and restroom building; pressure washing building exteriors; pressure washing and resealing picnic shelters; and table/chair replacement in the educational building;
- Renovate and improve existing trails;
- Design and build additional trails;
- Install additional park benches along trails;
- Add a natural or conventional playground designed to be compatible with the environment. There are no other playground facilities in the general area;
- Water access should be improved/enlarged; and
- Primitive camping should be considered. It is recommended that the County add approximately 20 camp sites at Riverbend Park. A 24-hour park staff presence would be needed when facilities are in use.

Citizen Input

- The three most popular amenities were trail related, with 35 choosing natural surface trails, 19 choosing paved trails, and 18 choosing natural surface mountain bike trails;
- Boat, canoe, kayak access was the next most popular at 17 picks; and
- Horseback trails, playgrounds, splash pads, and primitive camping, and dog parks also ranked very high.

Riverbend has approximately 12 miles of natural hiking trails, but does not have any paved trails. The mountain bike trail system is in the process of being expanded. Horseback riding was permitted in the past, but was discontinued due

to a lack of people using the amenity, and high maintenance associated with this use. Primitive camping is desired, particularly by scouting groups, as this amenity is currently not offered in Catawba County.

Bakers Mountain Park

Staff/PAC Recommendation Summary

- Renovate existing facilities and infrastructure to include painting, floor covering, welcome sign renovation, building sign replacement, map stand replacement, border fence replacement, and pressure washing/resealing shelters.
- Parking should be added since often there are not enough spaces during weekend peak times or for educational events. Due to a lack of space with suitable topography for parking, additional land would need to be purchased.
- Purchase additional land suitable for expanded parking. (See Appendix Map 6 - Bakers Mountain Park) for adjacent parcels that meet the requirements for the Parks Division;
- Renovate and improve existing trails;
- Design and build additional trails;
- Install additional park benches along trails;
- An indoor meeting space should be constructed;
- Educational programming should be expanded; and
- Primitive camping should be considered.

Citizen Input

- Trail related requests ranked as the top three choices, with 33 choosing paved greenways, 22 requesting improvement of existing trails, and 29 choosing natural surface trails;
- Primitive Camping ranked as the next most popular at 22 picks; and
- Splash pad, native mature forest, community meeting/education center, playgrounds and educational programming also ranked very high.

Bakers Mountain has approximately six miles of natural surface hiking trails, and a ¼ mile pedestrian paved trail. Additional parking is needed to provide space for weekend or educational visitors. Primitive camping is desired, particularly by scouting groups, as this amenity is currently not offered in Catawba County. A community meeting room is wanted so school programs can be offered that include an indoor presentation followed by an outdoor nature walk.

St Stephens Park

Staff/PAC Recommendation Summary

- Expand the dog park to include a separate section for small dogs;
- Add amenities to the dog parks;
- Renovate, improve and pave existing trails;
- Design and build additional trails;

- Install additional park benches along trails; and
- Obtain land and expand the park into the unused land behind Clyde Campbell Elementary School which abuts St. Stephens.

Citizen Input

- Sand volleyball was a “write-in” request, and the most desired amenity with 36 picks.
- The dog park was the next most popular amenity with 12 picks.
- Trails were also ranked as very popular, with 11 choosing natural surface trails, and 10 wanting paved trails.

This existing 9.1 acre park facility had traditionally been operated by the City of Hickory as an active recreation facility. However, Catawba County assumed operation in 2008 and staffs it as a passive facility with a dog park. The dog park is highly used, with patrons and their dogs coming to the park every day the park is open. Due to the dog park and being a community park in a highly populated area, most patrons use the park every day that it is open. It is recommended that the unused land behind Clyde Campbell Elementary School which abuts St. Stephens become part of the park. Discussions should be held with school personnel to consider the possibility of forming an educational partnership. Proximity of the two establishments would facilitate using the park as an outdoor lab for science classes while doing nature hikes which could help fulfill the physical activity requirements for students. Sand volleyball was a desired amenity; however, Catawba County Parks mission is to provide passive recreation so a sand volleyball court is most likely not possible. Space and topography restraints would make installing a court difficult.

Bunker Hill Park (future)

Staff/PAC Recommendation Summary

- Multi-use building providing educational and community meeting space for a minimum of 50 occupants, restrooms, office facility;
- Paved trails meeting ADA requirements and natural surface walking trails designed to be compatible with topographical constraints;
- Install additional park benches along trails;
- Picnic facilities; and
- An outdoor amphitheater.

Facilities must be designed to ADA standards with sensitivity to the environmental and historic nature of the site.

Citizen Input

- Paved trails were the most desired amenity with 43 requests, and natural surface trails at 29 picks;
- Educational programs/guided tours/historical interpretation was the next most popular at 40 picks;

- Educational requests were very popular, wanting a community meeting/education center (18 picks) for educational programming, and interpretative signage (14 picks); and
- Restrooms, picnic facilities, and an outdoor amphitheater were also requested.

Catawba County Parks Division is working with the Catawba County Historical Association to continue developing and improving a passive park to provide an expanded park with historical and environmental opportunities. The historic covered bridge, historic roadbeds, and rare plant species are attractions of the park. The County and Historical Association have been working together in promoting and enhancing the historic bridge, through the provision of improved access and the development of facilities for the park. In addition, the master plan proposes a one-mile, multi-use trail from the park to connect to the I-40 rest area along Lyle Creek. This connection would allow visitors from across the nation (who stop at the rest area) the opportunity to visit one of North Carolina's significant historical attractions. Support facilities consist of an access road, parking areas, pedestrian bridges, and a multi-use building for restrooms, an office, and a meeting room. (See Appendix Map 7 - *Bunker Hill Covered Bridge Park Concept Plan*)

To develop this vision, there is collaboration between Catawba County Parks, Catawba County Historical Association and the State of North Carolina. In addition to potential funding possibilities, this partnership allows the Parks to assist with the maintenance and development of park amenities and facilities, therefore allowing the historical society to dedicate their efforts to educational programming and maintaining the historical structures.

Murray's Mill Park (future) Staff/PAC Recommendation Summary

- Provide educational and community meeting space for a minimum of 50 occupants, restrooms, office facility;
- Paved trails meeting ADA requirements and natural surface walking trails designed to be compatible with topographical constraints;
- Install additional park benches along trails; and
- Picnic facilities.

Facilities must be designed to ADA standards with sensitivity to the environmental and historic nature of the site.

Citizen Input Summary

- Guided tours/historical interpretation were the most desired amenity with 28 picks.
- Trails paved greenways (20 picks) and natural surface trails (16 picks) were the next most popular option.

- A community garden and picnic shelters were also very popular options.

Catawba County Parks Division will work with the Catawba County Historical Association to provide an expanded park with historical and environmental opportunities at Murray's Mill. Some natural surface trails are being constructed by the County, Historical Association and Carolina Thread Trail. There are currently no paved trails, a garden or picnic facilities. Trail development has already begun with the help of CTT volunteers. This partnership would also allow the Catawba County Parks Division to assist with the maintenance and development of park amenities and program staffing, therefore allowing the association to dedicate its efforts to educational programming and preservation of the historical structures.

Mountain Creek Park (future)

Staff/PAC Recommendation Summary

- Water amenities including swimming, boat canoe, kayak access fishing areas;
- Trails: natural surface, mountain biking trails and paved trails;
- Install additional park benches along trails;
- Picnic facilities;
- Multi-purpose building;
- Primitive camping; and
- Playground equipment: natural or conventional facilities which fit into the environment.

Citizen Recommendation Summary

- Water related amenities were the most desired choices with swimming at 32 picks, boat canoe, kayak access at 28 picks and fishing areas at 12 picks;
- Trail amenities were the second most popular with natural surface trails at 24 picks, mountain biking natural surface trails at 23 picks, and paved trails at 19 picks;
- Picnic facilities were very popular with shelters at 17 picks, picnic tables at 11 picks; and
- Dog park, equestrian trails, and primitive camping were also desired amenities.

As shown on Map 4 *Service Area Proposals and Recommendations*, a park is needed to service the southeastern area of the County. Catawba County has obtained 598 acres to create Mountain Creek Park; however, the park has not been developed to date. This is the first Catawba County Park that could offer swimming access to the Catawba River. Primitive camping is desired, particularly by scouting groups, as this amenity is currently not offered in Catawba County. (See Appendix Map 8 – *Proposed Conceptual Mountain Creek Park*)

As a recommendation for all park facilities, a meeting/educational facility is also proposed for this park. It would offer multiple opportunities for schools, environmental groups, and other organizations. Restrooms and the park office need to be strategically located to allow for smooth operation of the park while minimizing and preserving the existing resources.

Primitive camping was listed as a need by community survey respondents. It is recommended that 20 primitive camping sites be included in the proposed park. A 24-hour park staff presence would be needed when facilities are in use.

Mountain View Recreation Center Staff/PAC Recommendation Summary

- Meet with the Recreation Resources Services (RRS) representative to review grant obligations and render an opinion on priorities, accessibility requirements, and possible functionally obsolete amenities; and
- Periodically review contractual agreement for maintenance and operations with Mountain View Recreation Association.

Catawba County owns 5.05 acres of Mountain View Recreation Center, but the daily operation of the park is handled by the Mountain View Recreation Association. The County is required to bring the facility into ADA compliance. This will necessitate adding ADA compliant parking, restrooms and making the pathways and structures accessible under ADA guidelines. The County will also be addressing maintenance-related safety concerns with the facility infrastructure.

It is recommended that the County periodically review the contractual agreement for maintenance and operations with Mountain View Recreation Association.

Survey

To gather more in-depth data from both park users and non-park users, a survey was created. Each forum participant was encouraged to fill out a survey while at the forum, and take hard copies for other family members. A handout was given to each attendee with the web address to follow the progress of the plan, and advertise the date of a fifth open house to view data from the four input sessions and preview the recommendations of the draft plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

A detailed listing of “choice sheet” responses can be seen in Sec. 5.4 *Community Meeting Data Collection*.

A summary of Community Survey responses can be found in Section 5.5 *Executive Summary – Community Survey*. A detailed listing of responses can be seen in Sec. 5.6 *Community Survey Data Collection*.

An overall Parks Executive Summary can be found at the beginning of this Master Plan.

5.4 COMMUNITY MEETING DATA COLLECTION

Below are copies of the “choice sheets”, where participants were asked to mark their favorite amenities for each park. Each sheet had a listing of amenities that were in the park and activities that could possibly be added, while keeping with Catawba County Parks mission to provide passive recreation. Forum attendees also had the opportunity to add “other” amenities that were not on the list.

A summary and analysis of results can be seen in *Section 5.4 Executive Summary — Community Meetings*.

Table 5.2.2 Riverbend Community Meeting Results

Riverbend Park

The County's mission for Parks is to provide passive recreation and educational opportunities.

Please mark your favorite existing or wanted amenities in the Parks.

| <u>Amenity</u> | <u>Existing Infrastructure</u> | <u>Total</u> | <u>Mountain View (Red)</u> | <u>County (Green)</u> | <u>Hickory (Yellow)</u> | <u>Sherrills Ford (Blue)</u> |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Trails - Bicycle /Hiking/Running - Natural Surface | x | 35 | 9 | 13 | 11 | 2 |
| Trails - Bicycle/pedestrian Greenways - Paved | | 19 | 6 | 9 | 2 | 2 |
| Trails - Mountain Biking - Natural Surface | x | 18 | 6 | 9 | 3 | |
| Boat, Canoe, Kayak Access | x | 17 | 6 | 7 | 3 | 1 |
| Other: Horseback Riding Trails | | 16 | 8 | 3 | | 5 |
| Playgrounds – Natural | | 15 | 9 | 3 | 3 | |
| Splash Pad | | 15 | 7 | 4 | 3 | 1 |
| Primitive Camping | | 12 | 3 | 6 | 3 | |
| Dog Parks | x | 10 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Educational Programming | x | 8 | 5 | 2 | | 1 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Trail - Fitness/Amenities | | 8 | 3 | 3 | 2 | |
| Interpretive Trail Signage | x | 7 | 1 | 4 | 2 | |
| Park Benches | x | 7 | 5 | | | 2 |
| Picnic Shelter | x | 7 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Geocaching | x | 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 | |
| Open Space/Natural Areas | x | 6 | 2 | 3 | 1 | |
| Disc Golf Course | | 5 | 4 | 1 | | |
| Fishing Areas and Amenities | x | 5 | 2 | 1 | | 2 |
| Outdoor Amphitheater | | 5 | 3 | 1 | 1 | |
| Picnic Tables | x | 5 | 2 | 1 | 2 | |
| Bicycle Pump Trail | | 5 | 1 | 1 | 3 | |
| Horseshoe Pits | | 4 | 4 | | | |
| Other: Better Signage | | 4 | | 4 | | |
| Other: Small Dog Park | | 3 | 2 | | 1 | |
| Other: Mid-point takeout/Access to look-out | | 3 | | | 3 | |
| Community Meeting/Education Center | x | 2 | | 1 | 1 | |
| Other: Pickle Ball | | 1 | 1 | | | |
| Other: Sand Volleyball | | 1 | | 1 | | |
| Other: Improved Trail Maintenance | | 1 | | 1 | | |

Table 5.2.3 Bakers Mountain Community Meeting Results

Bakers Mountain

The County's mission for Parks is to provide passive recreation and educational opportunities.

Please mark your favorite existing or wanted amenities in the Parks.

| | <u>Amenity</u> | <u>Existing Infrastructure</u> | <u>Total</u> | <u>Mountain View (Red)</u> | <u>County (Green)</u> | <u>Hickory (Yellow)</u> | <u>Sherrills Ford (Blue)</u> |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | Trails - Bicycle/pedestrian Greenways - Paved | | 33 | 20 | 7 | 3 | 3 |
| | Other: Improve Existing Trails | | 33 | 27 | 4 | 2 | |
| | Trails - Pedestrian - Natural Surface | X | 29 | 10 | 8 | 11 | |
| | Primitive Camping | | 22 | 19 | 3 | | |
| | Splash Pad | | 19 | 15 | 2 | 2 | |
| | Native Mature Forest | | 18 | 12 | 3 | 3 | |
| | Community Meeting/Education Center | | 16 | 15 | | 1 | |
| | Playgrounds – Natural | | 15 | 12 | | 3 | |
| | Geocaching and signage | X | 14 | 10 | 3 | 1 | |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|----|----|---|---|---|
| | Dog Parks | | 13 | 8 | 5 | | |
| | Educational Programming | X | 13 | 11 | | 2 | |
| | Trail - Fitness/Amenities | | 13 | 8 | 2 | 3 | |
| | Horseshoe Pits | | 11 | 10 | 1 | | |
| | Picnic Tables | X | 11 | 9 | | 1 | 1 |
| | Park Benches | X | 10 | 8 | 1 | 1 | |
| | Interpretive Trail Signage | X | 9 | 5 | 1 | 3 | |
| | Outdoor Amphitheater | | 9 | 7 | | 2 | |
| | Picnic Shelter | X | 8 | 7 | | 1 | |
| | Open Space/Natural Areas | X | 7 | 6 | | 1 | |
| | Other: Better Signage | | 5 | | 4 | 1 | |
| | Other: Mountain Biking Trails - Natural | | 5 | 4 | | 1 | |
| | Other: Equestrian Trails | | 3 | | | | 3 |
| | Other: Big Slide | | 2 | 1 | | 1 | |

Table 5.2.4 St Stephens Community Meeting Results

St Stephens

The County's mission for Parks is to provide passive recreation and educational opportunities.
 Please mark your favorite existing or wanted amenities in the Parks.

| | <u>Amenity</u> | <u>Existing Infrastructure</u> | <u>Total</u> | <u>Mountain View (Red)</u> | <u>County (Green)</u> | <u>Hickory (Yellow)</u> | <u>Sherrills Ford (Blue)</u> |
|--|--|---|---------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| | Other: Sand Volleyball | | 36 | | | 36 | |
| | Dog Parks | x | 12 | 5 | 2 | 5 | |
| | Trails - Bicycle /Hiking/Running - Natural Surface | x | 11 | 2 | 3 | 6 | |
| | Trails - Bicycle/pedestrian Greenways - Paved | | 10 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| | Splash Pad | | 7 | 2 | 1 | 4 | |
| | Playgrounds – Natural | x | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | |
| | Trail - Fitness/Amenities | | 4 | | 3 | 1 | |
| | Geocaching | x | 3 | 3 | | | |
| | Open Space/Natural Areas | x | 3 | 2 | | | 1 |
| | Community Garden | | 2 | 1 | | 1 | |
| | Outdoor Amphitheater | | 2 | 1 | | 1 | |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| | Park Benches | x | 2 | 2 | | | |
| | Picnic Shelter | x | 2 | 2 | | | |
| | Other: Small Dog Park | | 2 | 1 | 1 | | |
| | Community Meeting/Education Center | x | 1 | 1 | | | |
| | Disc Golf Course | | 1 | 1 | | | |
| | Horseshoe Pits | x | 1 | 1 | | | |
| | Interpretive Trail Signage | | 1 | 1 | | | |
| | Picnic Tables | x | 1 | 1 | | | |
| | Other: Pickleball | | 1 | 1 | | | |
| | Educational Programming | x | 0 | | | | |
| | Other: Bocce Ball | | 1 | 1 | | | |

Table 5.2.5 Bunker Hill Community Meeting Results

Bunker Hill

The County's mission for Parks is to provide passive recreation and educational opportunities.

Please mark your favorite existing or wanted amenities in the Parks.

| <u>Amenity</u> | <u>Existing Infrastructure</u> | <u>Total</u> | <u>Mountain View (Red)</u> | <u>County (Green)</u> | <u>Hickory (Yellow)</u> | <u>Sherrills Ford (Blue)</u> |
|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Trails - Bicycle/pedestrian Greenways - Paved | | 43 | 15 | 18 | 6 | 4 |
| Educational Programs/Guided Tours/Historical Interpretation | x | 40 | 11 | 20 | 5 | 4 |
| Trails - Bicycle /Hiking/Running - Natural Surface | x | 29 | 6 | 17 | 6 | |
| Community Meeting/Education Center | | 18 | 2 | 11 | 3 | 2 |
| Interpretive Trail Signage | | 14 | 2 | 9 | 3 | |
| Picnic Tables | x | 11 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 3 |
| Other: Bathroom | | 11 | | 7 | 2 | 2 |
| Open Space/Natural Areas | x | 10 | 1 | 8 | 1 | |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Community Garden | | 8 | 1 | 5 | 2 | |
| | Picnic Shelter | x | 8 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| | Outdoor Amphitheater | | 7 | 2 | 1 | | 4 |
| | Splash Pad | | 7 | 3 | 3 | 1 | |
| | Park Benches | x | 6 | 2 | 2 | | 2 |
| | Playgrounds – Natural | | 6 | 2 | 3 | 1 | |
| | Other: Primitive Camping | | 6 | | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| | Dog Parks | | 5 | 2 | 2 | 1 | |
| | Trail - Fitness/Amenities | | 4 | 1 | 3 | | |
| | Geocaching | | 2 | | 2 | | |
| | Disc Golf Course | | 0 | | | | |
| | Horseshoe Pits | | 0 | | | | |

Table 5.2.6 Murray's Mill Community Meeting Results

Murray's Mill

The County's mission for Parks is to provide passive recreation and educational opportunities.

Please mark your favorite existing or wanted amenities in the Parks.

| <u>Amenity</u> | <u>Existing Infrastructure</u> | <u>Total</u> | <u>Mountain View (Red)</u> | <u>County (Green)</u> | <u>Hickory (Yellow)</u> | <u>Sherrills Ford (Blue)</u> |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Other: Guided Tours/Historical Interpretation | | 28 | 14 | 7 | 3 | 4 |
| Trails - Bicycle/pedestrian Greenways - Paved** | | 20 | 3 | 9 | 6 | 2 |
| Trails - Bicycle /Hiking/Running - Natural Surface | x | 16 | 3 | 7 | 3 | 3 |
| Community Garden | | 10 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 1 |
| Picnic Shelter | | 9 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Playgrounds – Natural | | 8 | 4 | 2 | 2 | |
| Other: Airsoft/Paintball | | 8 | | | | 8 |
| Community Meeting/Education Center | | 7 | | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| Educational Programming | x | 7 | 4 | 3 | | |
| Outdoor Amphitheater | | 6 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Trail - Fitness/Amenities | | 6 | 5 | 1 | | |
| | Other: Bathrooms | | 6 | | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| | Dog Parks | | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2 | |
| | Open Space/Natural Areas | x | 5 | 1 | 3 | | 1 |
| | Park Benches | x | 5 | 1 | | 2 | 2 |
| | Splash Pad | | 5 | 3 | 1 | 1 | |
| | Interpretive Trail Signage | | 4 | 3 | | 1 | |
| | Other: Primitive Camping | | 4 | | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| | Geocaching | | 3 | 2 | 1 | | |
| | Picnic Tables | x | 3 | | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | Horseshoe Pits | | 2 | 1 | | 1 | |
| | Other: Boat Access | | 1 | | 1 | | |
| | Disc Golf Course | | 0 | | | | |

** Paved loop trail around barn

Table 5.2.7 Mountain Creek Community Meeting Results

Mountain Creek

The County's mission for Parks is to provide passive recreation and educational opportunities.

Please mark your favorite existing or wanted amenities in the Parks.

| <u>Amenity</u> | <u>Existing Infrastructure</u> | <u>Total</u> | <u>Mountain View (Red)</u> | <u>County (Green)</u> | <u>Hickory (Yellow)</u> | <u>Sherrills Ford (Blue)</u> |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Outdoor Swimming | | 32 | 16 | 4 | 5 | 7 |
| Boat, Canoe, Kayak Access | x | 28 | 1 | 9 | 7 | 11 |
| Trails - Bicycle /Hiking/Running - Natural Surface | x | 24 | 9 | 15 | | |
| Trails - Mountain Biking - Natural Surface | x | 23 | 5 | 14 | 1 | 3 |
| Trails - Bicycle/pedestrian Greenways - Paved | | 19 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 10 |
| Picnic Shelter | x | 17 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 10 |
| Dog Parks | x | 16 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| Equestrian Trails | | 15 | 6 | | | 9 |
| Primitive Camping | | 15 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| Park Benches | x | 13 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 9 |
| Open Space/Natural Areas | x | 13 | 1 | | 3 | 9 |
| Fishing Areas and Amenities | x | 12 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 5 |

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|----|---|---|---|---|
| Trail - Fitness/Amenities | | 12 | 2 | 1 | | 9 |
| Picnic Tables | x | 11 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 7 |
| Splash Pad | | 11 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| Playgrounds – Natural | | 10 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Educational Programming | x | 10 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Other: Bath House/Bathroom | | 7 | | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| Disc Golf Course | | 6 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Outdoor Amphitheater | | 6 | 2 | | 1 | 3 |
| Community Garden | | 6 | 1 | | 2 | 3 |
| Community Meeting/Education Center | x | 4 | 1 | 1 | | 2 |
| Horseshoe Pits | | 4 | 1 | 1 | | 2 |
| Geocaching | x | 3 | 2 | | 1 | |
| Interpretive Trail Signage | x | 3 | 3 | | | |
| Other: Multi-Sport Field | | 3 | | | | 3 |
| Bicycle Pump Trail | | 2 | 1 | | | 1 |
| Sand Volleyball | | 2 | | | 1 | 1 |
| Tennis Court | | 2 | | | | 2 |
| Other: Geocaching Signage | | 1 | 1 | | | |
| Other: Bike Wash station | | 1 | | 1 | | |

5.5 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – COMMUNITY SURVEY

A survey was created to gather more in-depth data from both park users and non-park users. Each person who attended one of the five open house forums was encouraged to fill out a survey while at the event, and take hard copies for other friends and family members.

This survey was made available on-line after the public forums took place, and was advertised as a second event, in the same manner as the open house sessions were promoted. Surveys were advertised through area newspapers (Charlotte Observer, Hickory Daily Record, Observer News Enterprise); the County public e-newsletter; the County employee newsletter; County, Planning, and Parks website pages; County and Parks social media; and e-mail blasts to County employees. Surveys were sent to area non-profit group officers who were encouraged to forward them to their members. These non-profit groups included: Catawba County Historical Association, Lions Club, Garden Club, Friends of the Library, Rotary Club, and Optimist Club. Surveys were distributed by Parks Advisory Committee members in their local neighborhoods, churches, workplaces, libraries, civic organizations, businesses, contacts, friends and family. The survey could be completed on-line, or hard copies could be obtained through Catawba County Planning; Riverbend, Mountain Creek, and St. Stephens Parks, and Catawba County Historical Association, or any Parks Committee member. The Parks Advisory Committee is a diverse group of men/women, with varied ages, affiliations, and ethnicity.

Surveys became available to all County residents in hard copy and on-line at the first public forum on 2/18/14 and remained available until 3/31/14. A total of 655 completed surveys were received making results statically valid.

The following is an analysis of survey responses:

- 65% of respondents were female, 35% were male.
- 90% were residents of Catawba County.
- The majority of respondents were County residents; however, 20 people were from other areas within the County, and five came from other states.
- 41% were between ages 18 and 44, 46% were between 45 and 64, 12% were 65 and older. Only 1% was under 17. Preferences by age group have planning implications since demographics in *Section 2 Population Trends and Projections* indicate a growth in the senior population. The mix was representative of the County population.
- 92% of respondents were of Caucasian/European descent. Respondents of African, Asian Hispanic or other descent, each accounted for 2% of respondents.
- With parks open 4 days a week 36% of respondents visit Riverbend daily, weekly, or bi-weekly. 29% of respondents visit Bakers Mountain daily,

- weekly, or bi-weekly. 15% of respondents visit St. Stephens daily, weekly, or bi-weekly.
- When asked which days respondents would likely visit the parks between 8:00am and 12:00 noon, 52% said Sunday, approximately 25% said Monday through Friday, and 86% said Saturday. This shows a demand for more park availability in the morning.
 - When asked which days respondents would likely visit the parks between 12:00 noon and 5:00 pm, 81% said Sunday, approximately 26% said Monday through Friday, and 80% said Saturday. This shows a demand for more afternoon park availability.
 - When asked which days respondents would likely visit the parks between after 5:00 pm, 50% said they would like to visit Monday through Thursday, 71% said Friday, and 65% said Saturday. This shows a demand for more park availability during evening hours.
 - When asked which improvements should be made to existing parks, most chose increased hours of operations (55%) 50% chose enhanced/expanded trails, 32% said camping facilities, 32% said expanded picnic and sitting areas. Other requests and comments included educational meeting facilities, restrooms, and more programs and events.
 - The five favorite amenities were: natural trails, paved trails, mountain biking, picnicking, dog parks, and water activities.
 - People wanted special events in the park to include musical events, wellness/fitness sessions, science programs, historical events and astronomy events.
 - Of the three future parks, Bunker Hill, Mountain Creek and Murray's Mill, respondents said they would like to see Bunker Hill Covered Bridge developed first (43%), followed by Mountain Creek (33%) and Murray's Mill (24%).
 - When asked the main reasons people go the park, 69% listed the outdoor nature experience, 56% said wellness/physical fitness/exercise, and 34% said wellness /emotional health/relaxation.
 - Fifty-eight individuals said they might be willing to volunteer at the parks indicating a need for a structured volunteer program.

Survey Input Summary

- Most people come to the parks for health reasons: outdoor experience and exercise/wellness opportunities;
- All parks need to operate on a six-day per week schedule. Four-day weeks impede daily health hikes, ability of schools to use parks, and grant possibilities;
- Bunker Hill is requested as the first future park to be built;
- Favorite amenities were trails, with canoeing/kayaking, educational events, and picnicking also important;

- Continue to staff all parks during open hours to enhance both safety and park maintenance. Hikers and dog park patrons appreciate staff for safety reasons;
- Add more trails; maintain trails to a higher degree;
- Expand picnic and sitting areas;
- Add a community meeting/education center at Bakers Mountain and other sites as appropriate;
- Add events featuring music, astronomy, art, and physical fitness sessions in the parks;
- Increase interpretative signage to identify environmental, natural, or historical features;
- Develop a consistent guided environmental education program for individuals and families.

Responses to each survey question can be found in *Section 5.6 Community Survey Data Collection*.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

A detailed listing of Survey responses can be seen in *Sec. 5.6 Community Survey Data Collection*.

A summary of Community Forum “choice sheets” responses can be found in *Section 5.3 Executive Summary – Community Meetings*. A detailed listing of responses can be seen in *Sec. 5.4 Community Meeting Data Collection*.

An overall Parks Master Plan Executive Summary can be found at the beginning of this Master Plan.

5.6 COMMUNITY SURVEY DATA COLLECTION

The surveys took a broader view of amenities, and did not differentiate between parks. Questions were asked regarding the overall park system to determine such things as optimal park hours, how often the respondent visited each park, which park they felt should be developed next, and overall desired amenities. See the sample survey questionnaire and individual results below. An Executive Summary of the survey findings follow in Section 5.6.

Survey 5.2.1 Public Survey



CATAWBA COUNTY PARKS 2014 MASTER PLAN SURVEY

The Catawba County Planning, Parks and Development Department is in the process of updating the Parks Master Plan for Catawba County and would like your input. You can receive additional survey copies for friends or other family members by calling (828)465-8380, or the survey can be found on our web page and filled out on-line at www.CatawbaCountyNC.Gov/Parks. Thank you for your interest in continuing to improve Catawba County Parks.

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female Resident of Catawba County: ☐ Yes ☐ No Zip Code: _____

Age Group?
☐ 5-17 ☐ 18-44 ☐ 45-64 ☐ 65 and over

Ethnicity?
☐ Caucasian/European Descent ☐ Hispanic
☐ African Descent ☐ Other
☐ Asian Descent

The County Parks are currently open to the public on Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, during daylight hours. To what extent do you agree that this existing schedule meets your needs?
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Check below how frequently you or others in your household have visited the following facilities.
 Riverbend: ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Once or twice a month ☐ Less than once a month
 Bakers Mtn.: ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Once or twice a month ☐ Less than once a month
 St. Stephens: ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Once or twice a month ☐ Less than once a month

What days and times would you most likely visit the parks?

| | Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|------------|--------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| 8-12 pm | | | | | | | |
| 12-5 pm | | | | | | | |
| After 5 pm | | | | | | | |

Check below improvements that should be made to EXISTING Catawba County Parks facilities (Riverbend Park, Bakers Mountain Park, and St. Stephens)

☐ Improved Parking Areas ☐ Expand Parks and Open Space Acreage
☐ Additional Interpretative Signage ☐ Increase Days and Hours of Operation
☐ More Public Restrooms ☐ Add Public Art at Parks
☐ Expanded Picnic and Sitting Areas ☐ Introduce Primitive Camping
☐ Enhanced/Expanded Trails Other: _____

Section 5 Recreation Needs Assessment

Catawba County Parks' mission is to provide passive recreation and educational opportunities. Please mark your favorite existing or preferred amenities in existing or future Parks. (Please pick 5.)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boat, Canoe, Kayak Access | <input type="checkbox"/> Park Benches |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Garden | <input type="checkbox"/> Picnic Areas – Open Grass |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Meeting/Education Center | <input type="checkbox"/> Picnic Shelter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disc Golf Course | <input type="checkbox"/> Picnic Tables |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dog Parks | <input type="checkbox"/> Playgrounds – Natural |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Equestrian Trails | <input type="checkbox"/> Primitive Camping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing Areas and Amenities | <input type="checkbox"/> Educational Programming |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Geocaching | <input type="checkbox"/> Trail - Fitness/Amenities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Horseshoe Pits | <input type="checkbox"/> Trails - Bicycle/Hiking/Running-Natural Surface |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interpretive Trail Signage | <input type="checkbox"/> Trails - Bicycle/pedestrian Greenways - Paved |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Open Space/Natural Areas | <input type="checkbox"/> Trails - Mountain Biking - Natural Surface |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor Amphitheater | Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor Swimming Area | |

Please list below, any recreation, educational programs or special events that you would like to see offered in existing or future Catawba County Parks: (Please pick 2)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art in the Park Event | <input type="checkbox"/> Musical Events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Astronomy Events | <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor Cooking Classes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental/Interpretive Programming | <input type="checkbox"/> Science Programs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bird Walks | <input type="checkbox"/> Scouting Opportunities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bird Banding | <input type="checkbox"/> Wellness/Healthy Eating Session |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gardening | <input type="checkbox"/> Wellness/Physical Fitness Session |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historical Events | Other: _____ |

The previous Park Plan identifies three future parks (Mountain Creek, Historic Bunker Hill Covered Bridge Park and Historic Murray's Mill). Which park would you like to see developed first?

- ☐ Mountain Creek ☐ Bunker Hill Covered Bridge ☐ Murray's Mill

What are the main reasons you go to the Parks? (Please pick 2)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wellness/Physical Fitness/Exercise | <input type="checkbox"/> Programming |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wellness/Psychological Health/Relaxation | <input type="checkbox"/> Dog Park |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor Nature Experience | <input type="checkbox"/> Family/Community Gathering |

Other Comments: _____

Would you be interested in volunteering at the Parks? If so please provide your contact information.

Name _____ Phone or e-mail _____

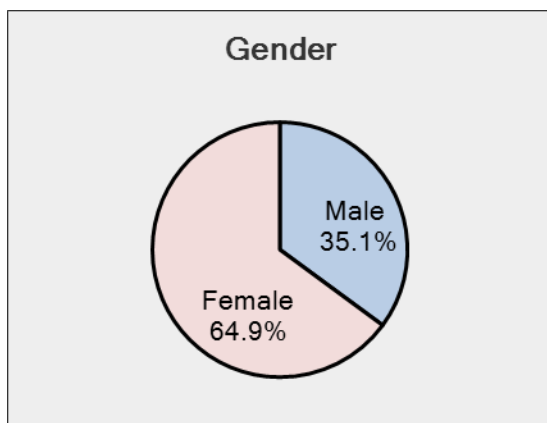
Please return survey by March 25, 2014:

- Fill out on-line: www.CatawbaCountyNC.Gov/Parks; or
- Mail: Catawba County, Planning and Community Development, PO Box 389, Newton, NC 28658; or
- Fax: (828) 465-8484; or
- Hand deliver: Planning, Parks and Development, Catawba County Government Center; or
 - Riverbend, Bakers Mountain, or St. Stephens Parks; or
- E-mail to: SBallbach@CatawbaCountyNC.gov

Charts 5.2.1 Multiple Charts Showing Public Survey Results

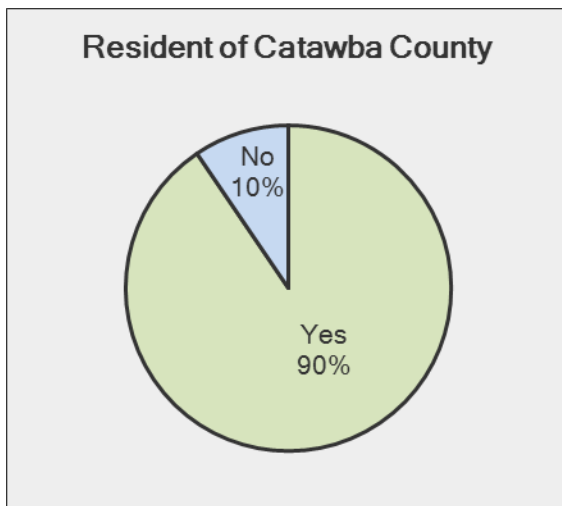
The following pages show the results of each survey question.

1. What is your gender?



| Gender: | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Male | 35.1% | 227 |
| Female | 64.9% | 419 |
| <i>answered question</i> | | 646 |
| <i>skipped question</i> | | 9 |

2. Are you a resident of Catawba County?



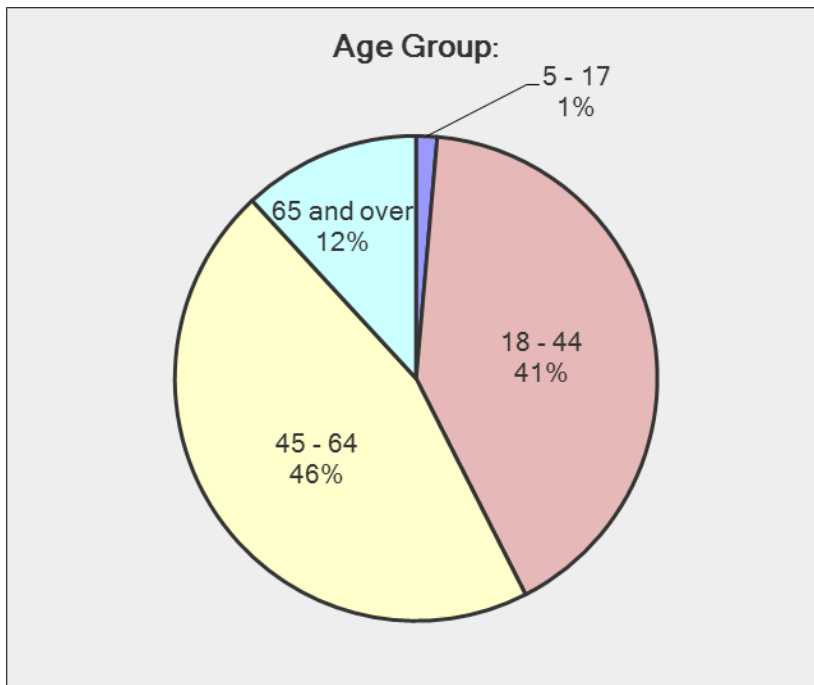
| Resident of Catawba County: | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Yes | 90.5% | 584 |
| No | 9.5% | 61 |
| <i>answered question</i> | | 645 |
| <i>skipped question</i> | | 10 |

3. What is your zip code?

| Zip Code | Location Vicinity | Responses |
|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 28037 | Denver | 3 |
| 28092 | Lincolnton | 6 |
| 28168 | Vale | 5 |
| 28601 | Hickory | 165 |
| 28602 | Hickory | 111 |
| 28603 | Hickory | 3 |
| 28609 | Catawba | 19 |
| 28610 | Claremont | 26 |
| 28612 | Connelly Springs | 4 |
| 28613 | Conover | 71 |
| 28630 | Granite Falls | 6 |
| 28650 | Maiden | 19 |
| 28658 | Newton | 100 |
| 28673 | Sherrills Ford | 51 |
| 28681 | Taylorsville | 11 |
| 28682 | Terrell | 11 |

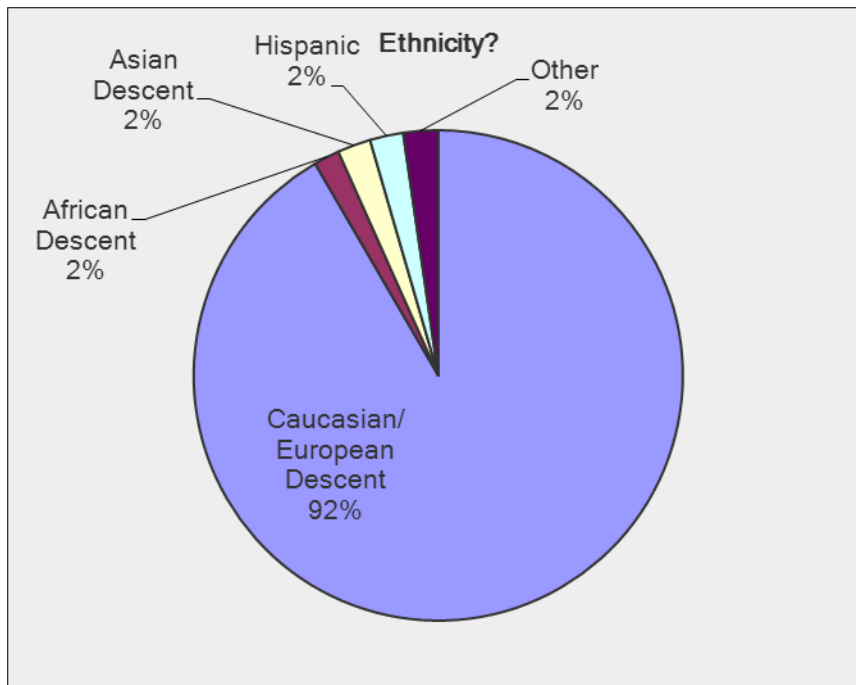
The majority of respondents were from Catawba County or within the region. However, other respondent NC locations included: Thomasville, Chapel Hill, Goldsboro, Harrisburg, Lawndale, Mooresville, Paw creek, Stanley, Blowing Rock, Boone, Hiddenite, Hudson, Jonas Ridge, Lenoir, Morganton, Statesville, Stony Point, Valdese, and Asheville. Out-of-state respondents were from Gaffney SC, Greer SC, Long Creek SC, Lorida FL, and Pace MI.

4. What is your age group?



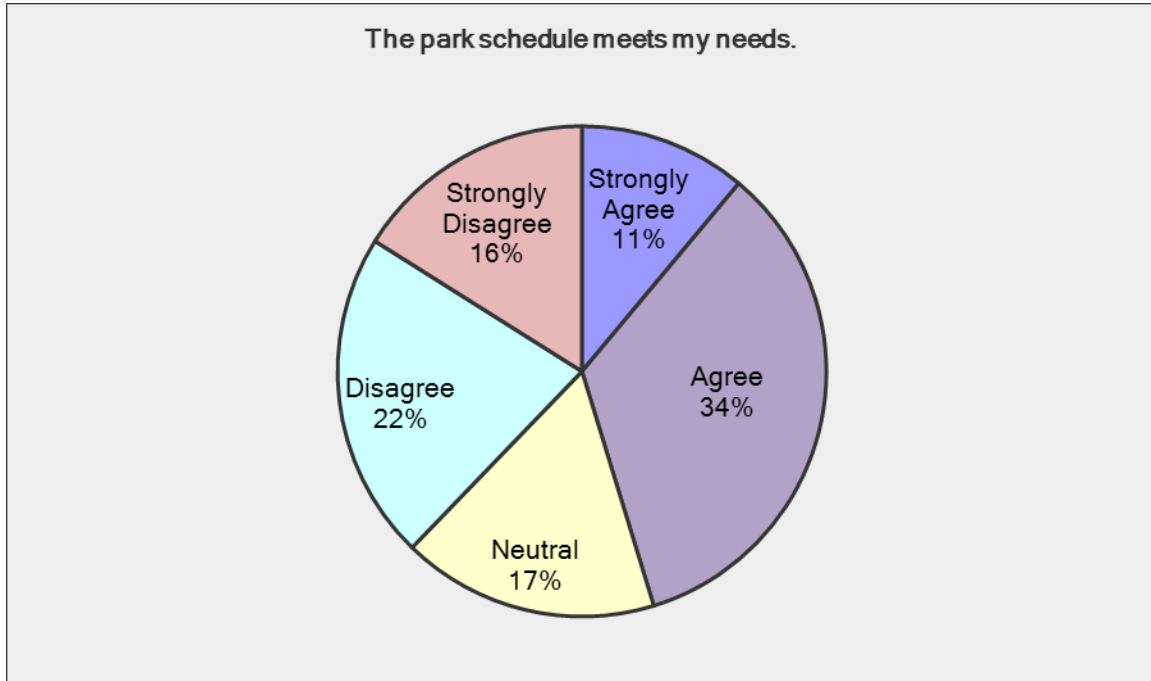
| Age Group: | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| 5 - 17 | 1.4% | 9 |
| 18 - 44 | 41.1% | 267 |
| 45 - 64 | 45.6% | 296 |
| 65 and over | 11.9% | 77 |
| <i>answered question</i> | | 649 |
| <i>skipped question</i> | | 6 |

5. What is your ethnicity?



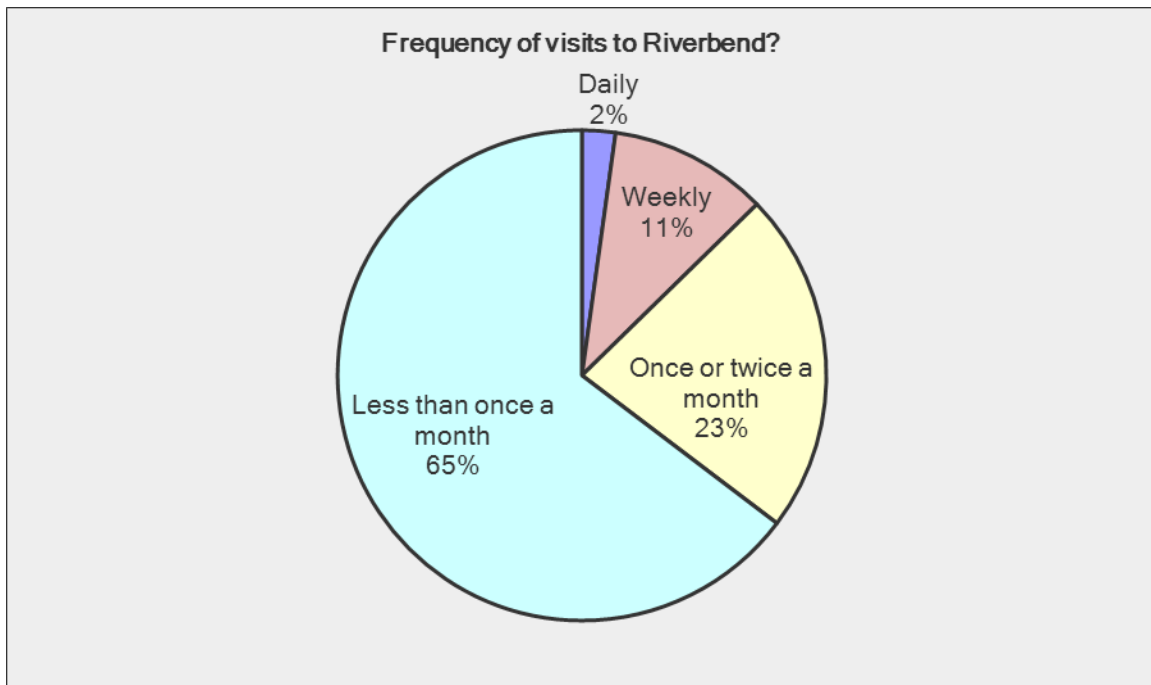
| Ethnicity? | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Caucasian/European Descent | 91.6% | 590 |
| African Descent | 1.7% | 11 |
| Asian Descent | 2.2% | 14 |
| Hispanic | 2.2% | 14 |
| Other | 2.3% | 15 |
| <i>answered question</i> | | 644 |
| <i>skipped question</i> | | 11 |

6. The County Parks are currently open to the public on Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, during daylight hours. To what extent do you agree that this existing schedule meets your needs?



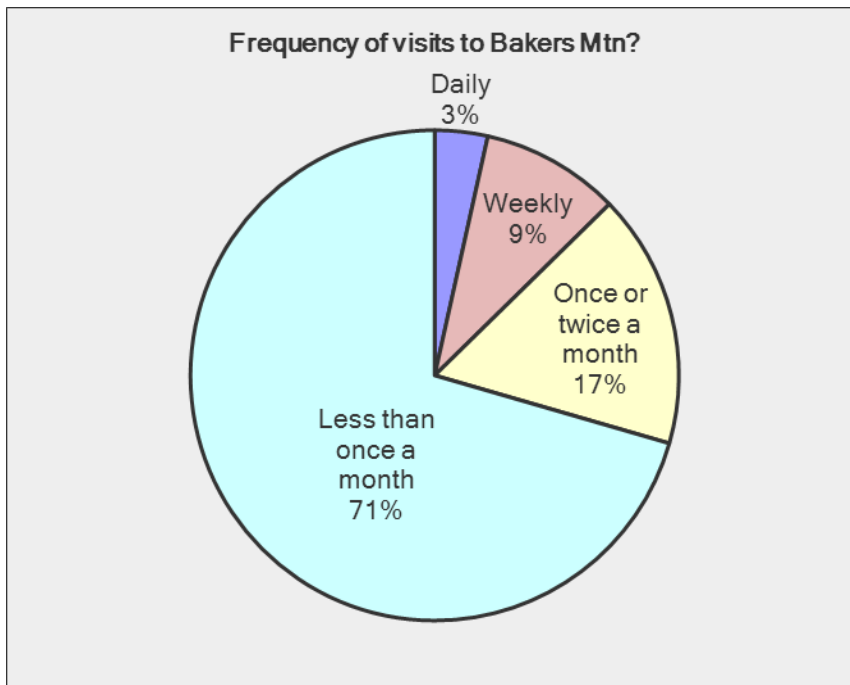
| The park schedule meets my needs. | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Strongly Agree | 11.1% | 71 |
| Agree | 34.2% | 219 |
| Neutral | 17.0% | 109 |
| Disagree | 21.7% | 139 |
| Strongly Disagree | 16.1% | 103 |
| <i>answered question</i> | | 641 |
| <i>skipped question</i> | | 14 |

7. How often do you visit Riverbend?



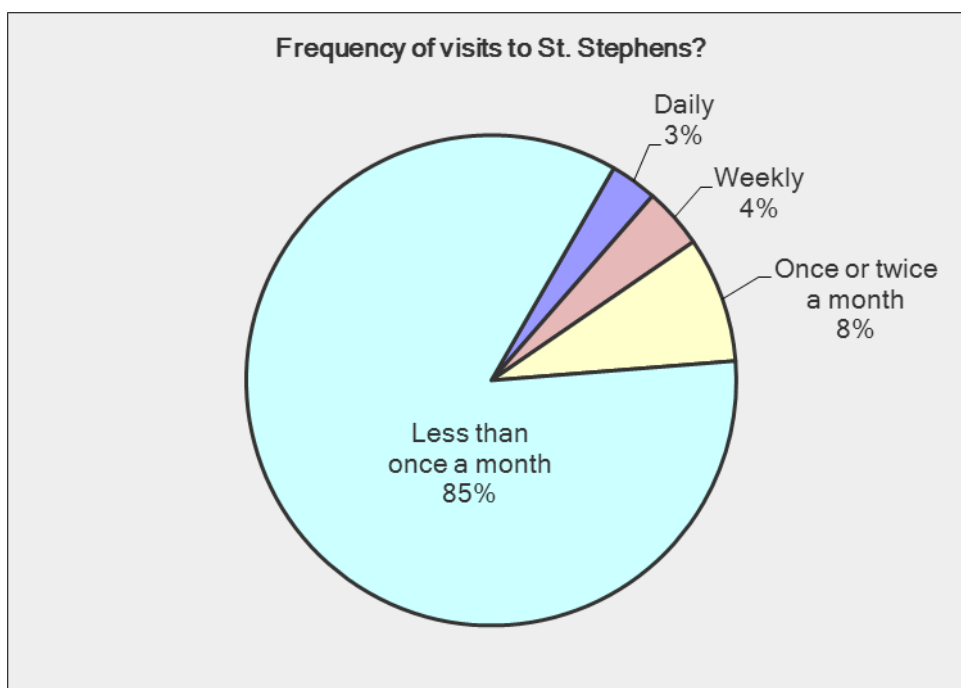
| Frequency of visits to Riverbend? | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Daily | 2.2% | 13 |
| Weekly | 10.5% | 61 |
| Once or twice a month | 22.6% | 131 |
| Less than once a month | 64.7% | 375 |
| answered question | | 580 |
| skipped question | | 75 |

8. How often do you visit Bakers Mtn?



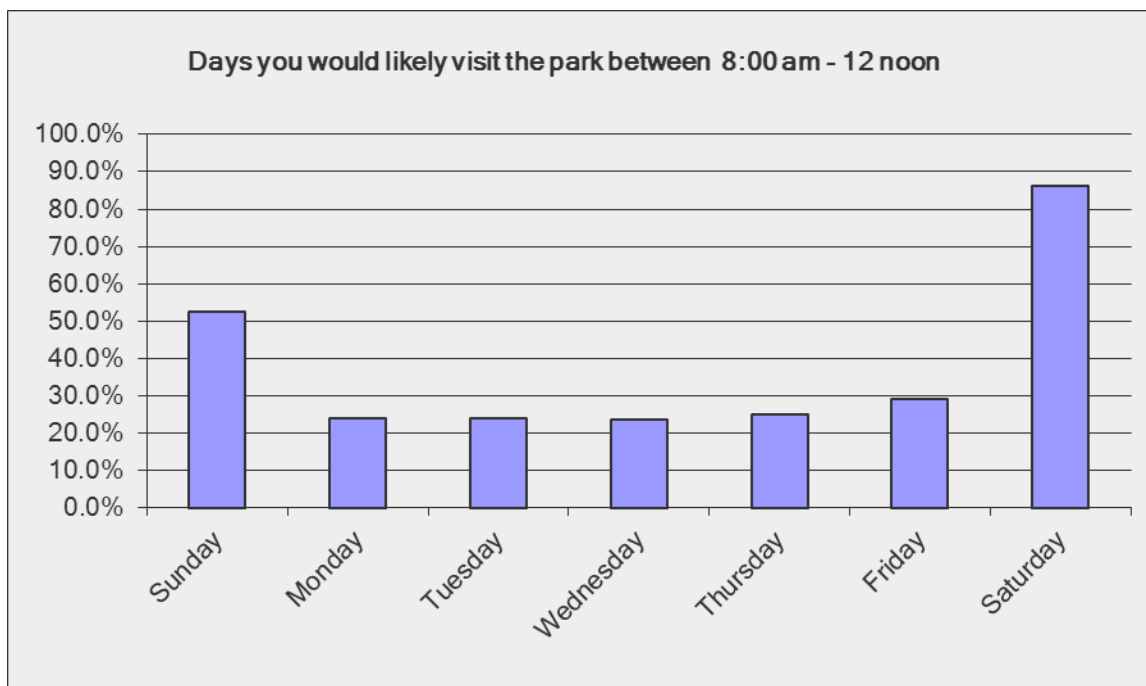
| Frequency of visits to Bakers Mtn? | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Daily | 3.5% | 20 |
| Weekly | 9.2% | 53 |
| Once or twice a month | 16.8% | 97 |
| Less than once a month | 70.6% | 409 |
| answered question | | 579 |
| skipped question | | 76 |

9. How often do you visit St. Stephens?



| Frequency of visits to St. Stephens? | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Daily | 3.1% | 16 |
| Weekly | 4.0% | 21 |
| Once or twice a month | 8.3% | 43 |
| Less than once a month | 84.6% | 439 |
| answered question | | 519 |
| skipped question | | 136 |

10. Rate what days you would likely visit the park between 8:00 am – 12:00 noon.



| Days you would likely visit the park between 8:00 am - 12:00 noon | | |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Sunday | 52.5% | 186 |
| Monday | 24.0% | 85 |
| Tuesday | 24.0% | 85 |
| Wednesday | 23.4% | 83 |
| Thursday | 25.1% | 89 |
| Friday | 29.1% | 103 |
| Saturday | 86.2% | 305 |
| <i>answered question</i> | | 354 |
| <i>skipped question</i> | | 301 |

11. Rate what days you would likely visit the park between 12:00 noon – 5:00 pm



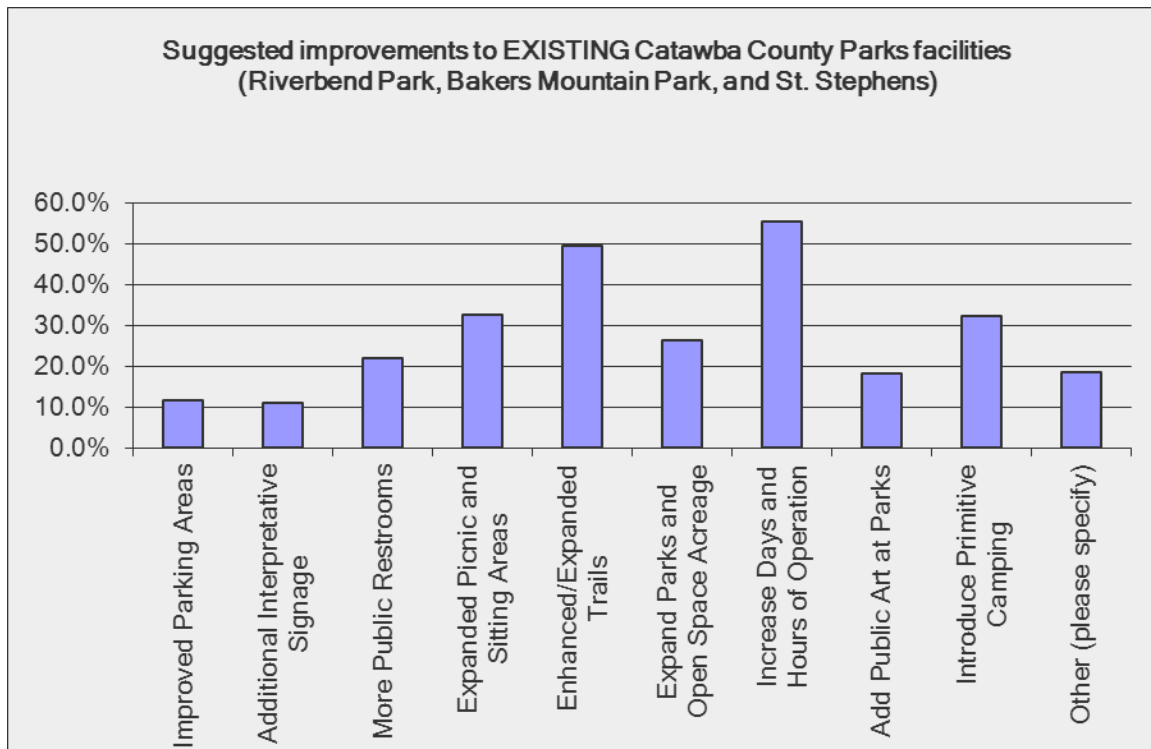
| Days you would likely visit the park between 12:00 noon - 5:00 pm | | |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Sunday | 80.7% | 389 |
| Monday | 23.9% | 115 |
| Tuesday | 25.7% | 124 |
| Wednesday | 25.3% | 122 |
| Thursday | 29.0% | 140 |
| Friday | 38.2% | 184 |
| Saturday | 80.3% | 387 |
| <i>answered question</i> | | 482 |
| <i>skipped question</i> | | 173 |

12. Rate what days you would likely visit the park after 5:00 pm



| Days you would likely visit the park after 5:00 pm | | |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Sunday | 50.9% | 176 |
| Monday | 50.9% | 176 |
| Tuesday | 50.3% | 174 |
| Wednesday | 51.2% | 177 |
| Thursday | 52.3% | 181 |
| Friday | 71.1% | 246 |
| Saturday | 65.0% | 225 |
| <i>answered question</i> | | 346 |
| <i>skipped question</i> | | 309 |

13. Check below improvements that should be made to EXISTING Catawba County Parks facilities (Riverbend Park, Bakers Mountain Park, and St. Stephens)



| Suggested improvements to EXISTING Catawba County Parks facilities (Riverbend Park, Bakers Mountain Park, and St. Stephens) | | |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Improved Parking Areas | 11.5% | 58 |
| Additional Interpretative Signage | 10.9% | 55 |
| More Public Restrooms | 22.0% | 111 |
| Expanded Picnic and Sitting Areas | 32.7% | 165 |
| Enhanced/Expanded Trails | 49.4% | 249 |
| Expand Parks and Open Space Acreage | 26.4% | 133 |
| Increase Days and Hours of Operation | 55.4% | 279 |
| Add Public Art at Parks | 18.3% | 92 |
| Introduce Primitive Camping | 32.1% | 162 |
| Other (please specify) | 18.5% | 93 |
| answered question | | 504 |
| skipped question | | 151 |

Other Comments:

| | |
|----|--|
| 1 | We've been through this before to no avail. When will you people listen? We have very politely and professionally spoken to your commissioners, once again to no avail. It's time to give the tax payers what they want. |
| 2 | Add back Wednesday if the budget allows |
| 3 | Enjoy walking after work |
| 4 | Could be more days and hours. |
| 5 | Extended summer hours -- I don't work and would like parks available during the week. |
| 6 | Reduce hours -- expand days open |
| 7 | Education building at Bakers Mtn. Also add week days. Open times to vary. |
| 8 | Consider flexible hours to allow more days open |
| 9 | Flexible hours |
| 10 | We could be flexible and open some days at 8 and some at 12. Doing this 2 days a week would give 8 hours to add another day. Our parks are our treasures it's too bad they are closed so much!!!! |
| 11 | Additional directional signage on trails – would really like to have more days/hours open |
| 12 | Would be nice to be open on Thursdays too. 7 days would be great, but if budget allow one more day can be added Thursday would be great. |
| 13 | Being closed throughout the mid-week is pure evil. You are open on weekends when the weather is horrific and on beautiful days in the middle of the week you are closed. |
| 14 | I am mainly interested in birding and hiking and would like to see the parks open more hours. |
| 15 | Parks should be open fulltime. |
| 16 | Please increase the hours at the park and water access inside the park for the dogs... the parks are great and we go every chance we get to play with our dogs. |
| 17 | Have either Riverbend or Bakers Mtn. open every day of week. If budget prevents more days, could open Riverbend Sat.-Tues and Bakers Mtn. Wed-Sun. so people have option of going to a park during the week too. Canoe rental at Riverbend. Paved bicycle trails somewhere!! |
| 18 | Natural area restoration |
| 19 | More educational programs |
| 20 | Would love to see some type of camping offered. |
| 21 | Splash pool, pickle ball court, climbing walls, good bicycle riding areas, basketball courts – metal baskets and hoops |
| 22 | Grade/repair existing trails at Bakers Mtn. |
| 23 | Equestrian Trails at Riverbend and Bakers Mountain Parks |
| 24 | More public fishing areas |
| 25 | I am an Alexander County resident and though we don't go on a regular basis, my husband and I do like to hike. We have used many of the Catawba County parks when our children were young, but now we go up the Blue Ridge to hike. It would be nice if there were parks closer by that we could hike in that were 2 to 3 miles. I am not sure the local parks have that or if you have expanded some of the trails. I will check out your websites. |

Section 5 Recreation Needs Assessment

| | |
|----|---|
| 26 | Ya'll do a great job. I'd like to have a multi dog pass created for people with rescue dogs--and not everyone with a lot of dogs is irresponsible with them ;-) |
| 27 | Dog parks at all parks |
| 28 | Splash pad |
| 29 | Boat rentals |
| 30 | Kayak access |
| 31 | Improved trails |
| 32 | Riverbend is looking a bit shabby: worn and used |
| 33 | Sand volleyball at St Stephens |
| 34 | Improve parking at Bakers Mtn. |
| 35 | Swimming |
| 36 | Great idea to add public art at parks |
| 37 | More guided tours, birding, owl and tree identification, native plants, etc |
| 38 | Kayak access downstream at Riverbend |
| 39 | Airsoft |
| 40 | Horseback riding |
| 41 | Horseback riding at Riverbend & Mtn. Creek |
| 42 | Tennis courts |
| 43 | Add a Dog Park in the Mtn. View area or at Bakers Mtn. |
| 44 | Re-instate equestrian use of certain trails on certain days of the week. |
| 45 | Disc golf course |
| 46 | Keep open areas and trails groomed, especially chop back the poison ivy. |
| 47 | Kids in Parks would be a great addition. http://kidsinparks.com/ |
| 48 | Add swimming |
| 49 | Develop/allow horse riding trails |
| 50 | There are no local parks within our area of Catawba County, long overdue. |
| 51 | Build park on Island Point Rd |
| 52 | Separate area for smaller dogs. |
| 53 | Sherrills Ford is a HUGE tax base for Catawba County, yet we get ZERO County Parks or any other benefits |
| 54 | Bakers Mountain is usually at full capacity on Sunday afternoons. We often have to park along the driveway or invent parking places. |
| 55 | Separate dog areas for large and small dogs. |
| 56 | We need a park in the southern end of Catawba. |
| 57 | Camping |

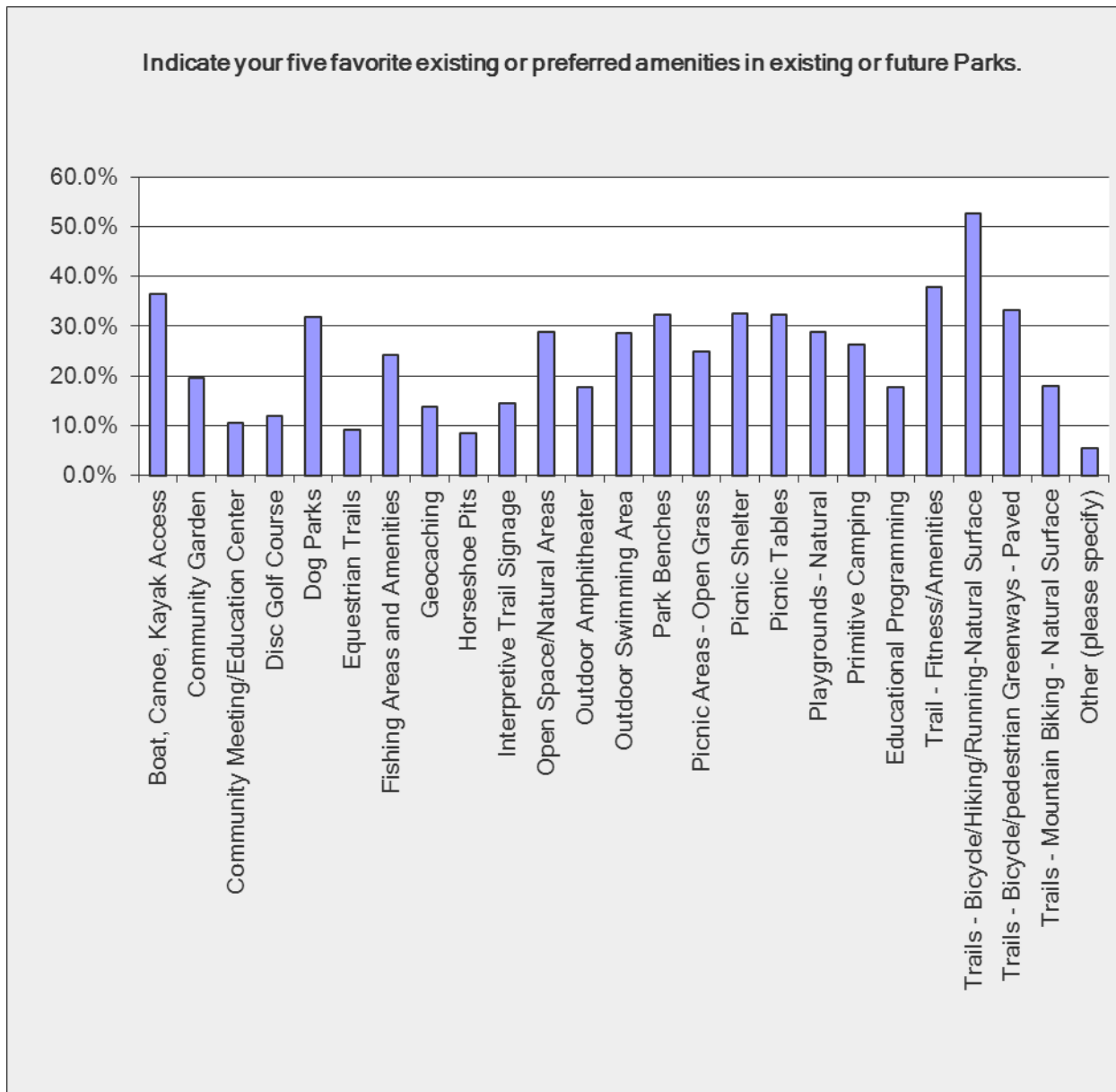
Section 5 Recreation Needs Assessment

| | |
|----|--|
| 58 | Allow more times to ride horses. |
| 59 | Now that I have a 2 year old son, I would like to see more things for children like a playground, slides, swings, etc. I know the new Conover City Park near the library is always full of people and children, and have a very nice area for children including the splash pad for summer months which is another great idea. We recently drove all the way to Northwest Hickory to take him to a park with playground equipment and he would have stayed all day. I have always wondered why they have an area for dogs to play, but not for children. At 2 years old, he is not much into nature walks. |
| 60 | Allow horses and build horse trails |
| 61 | Public swimming pool!!! Better playground equipment. Better tennis courts Climbing Wall Walking and Biking Trails Free Wi-Fi in Shelter Areas. Eating Area and Food/beverage trucks Live music on weekends and in summer. |
| 62 | Fishing |
| 63 | Mountain View desperately needs a park! |
| 64 | I am an avid disc golfer and I would really love to see a champion 18 hole disc golf course. Riverbend has such beautiful scenery. I hike there quite a bit and every time I imagine awesome disc golf holes. I feel that there is plenty of acreage out there for one. I feel the same way about Bakers Mtn. too. Our disc golf club here in Hickory is growing fast. We already have 60 members. And there is a lot of disc golfers in the greater Hickory area. The City of Charlotte already has over 18 courses. Disk golf is growing. Thanks |
| 65 | Add dog play area at Bakers Mountain, add water access for dog park users inside gated areas, addition of music in the parks on evenings/weekends would be an amazing addition to our community. |
| 66 | Out music venues for concerts/cookouts etc., fenced in dog area at bakers mountain, addition of water availability inside all dog park areas for filling bowl s and water bottles please! |
| 67 | Add a dog park area to Baker's Mt. |
| 68 | We live in m t view and need a fenced dog park closer to that side of town |
| 69 | Fenced in dog play area at Bakers Mtn. |
| 70 | Need some improvements at the dog parks. i.e. maybe do it yourself dog bath stations (use for a fee), watering stations, agility course, water feature for the dogs to play in. |
| 71 | Make sure dogs don't "go" on the walking trail. |
| 72 | A bit more grass, less mud would be beneficial |
| 73 | Love the educational experiences |
| 74 | A building to use for parties/get-togethers. |
| 75 | We need campsites |
| 76 | Canoe/kayak launch site would be nice. I am retired so I visit parks/greenways daily during work week. |
| 77 | None |
| 78 | More flowers |
| 79 | For Riverbend Park: create more sturdy trails along the river. Try to eliminate muddy trails with gravel /grass try to run some of the smaller trails to the small creeks, the water is the main attraction to your park-USE IT DON'T HIDE IT ! |
| 80 | Sand Volleyball |

Section 5 Recreation Needs Assessment

| | |
|----|--|
| 81 | Place more benches along the trails, especially at the end of a steep grade. Also, have more destinations along the farthest parts of the trails, like gazebos or picnic tables. |
| 82 | Add a kid's playground |
| 83 | Permanent orienteering course |
| 84 | Restore the covered bridge and the mill |
| 85 | Bike Trails |
| 86 | I would like to see the county help support youth recreation programs. |
| 87 | Public programs designed to attract citizens to learn about educational topics. |
| 88 | Park Ranger housing @ Riverbend and Bakers Mtn. |
| 89 | Better overall maintenance |
| 90 | I would love to have a pool at one of the parks |
| 91 | Add more playground equipment for children to play on. |
| 92 | More bike paths! |
| 93 | More park benches with backs should be added along the trails |

14. Catawba County Parks' mission is to provide passive recreation and educational opportunities. Please mark your favorite existing or preferred amenities in existing or future Parks. (Please pick 5.)



| Indicate your five favorite existing or preferred amenities in existing or future Parks. | | |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Boat, Canoe, Kayak Access | 36.4% | 202 |
| Community Garden | 19.6% | 109 |
| Community Meeting/Education Center | 10.6% | 59 |
| Disc Golf Course | 11.9% | 66 |
| Dog Parks | 31.9% | 177 |
| Equestrian Trails | 9.2% | 51 |
| Fishing Areas and Amenities | 24.3% | 135 |
| Geocaching | 13.9% | 77 |
| Horseshoe Pits | 8.5% | 47 |
| Interpretive Trail Signage | 14.4% | 80 |
| Open Space/Natural Areas | 28.8% | 160 |
| Outdoor Amphitheater | 17.7% | 98 |
| Outdoor Swimming Area | 28.6% | 159 |
| Park Benches | 32.4% | 180 |
| Picnic Areas - Open Grass | 25.0% | 139 |
| Picnic Shelter | 32.6% | 181 |
| Picnic Tables | 32.3% | 179 |
| Playgrounds - Natural | 28.8% | 160 |
| Primitive Camping | 26.3% | 146 |
| Educational Programming | 17.7% | 98 |
| Trail - Fitness/Amenities | 37.8% | 210 |
| Trails - Bicycle/Hiking/Running-Natural Surface | 52.6% | 292 |
| Trails - Bicycle/pedestrian Greenways - Paved | 33.2% | 184 |
| Trails - Mountain Biking - Natural Surface | 18.0% | 100 |
| Other (please specify) | 5.4% | 30 |
| answered question | | 555 |
| skipped question | | 100 |

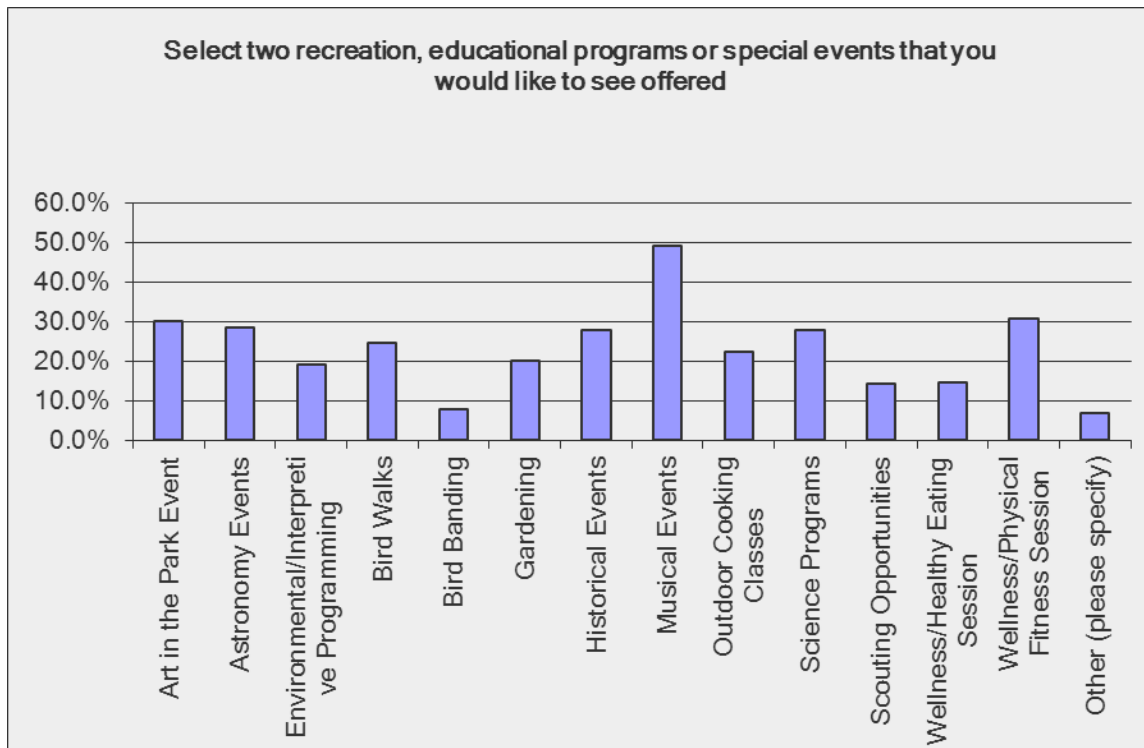
Other comments:

| | |
|----|--|
| 1 | Horse trails! |
| 2 | Would love to see primitive camping |
| 3 | Park system based around the rivers in the center west park of the county. |
| 4 | Take over Jacobs Fork park from the City of Newton and grow it up and downstream. The city of Newton has no business being out that far anyways. |
| 5 | Of the 500+ miles of shoreline on Lake Norman there is currently only 1 public swimming location. It would be nice if Catawba County would provide one also. |
| 6 | Use of natural resources in a sustainable manor to benefit both the parks and the residents of the county by providing assets so the parks can be improved. |
| 7 | Bath house |
| 8 | Historic Interpretation |
| 9 | Small dog park |
| 10 | Wildflower education programs |

Section 5 Recreation Needs Assessment

| | |
|----|--|
| 11 | Wildlife observation areas |
| 12 | Why would you add more to parks that are closed? They are just fine as is, just open them. |
| 13 | It would be great to have indoor sports facility for local team to utilize. (tennis, soccer, indoor pool for swim meets, track, etc) |
| 14 | Sand volley ball |
| 15 | History |
| 16 | Horse trails at Mountain Creek please |
| 17 | Future Park assistance/funding for local Sherrills Ford Community Park SFO. We serve several hundred children and are offered not one cent in assistance from the parks & rec dept. compared to others such as Lincoln county. These parks are used 7days a week. It would be beneficial for the county to put the money where the highest usage exists. |
| 18 | Nature photography. |
| 19 | Splash pad |
| 20 | Boat launch |
| 21 | We need a park in the southern end of Catawba |
| 22 | Playground equipment, slides, swings, splash pad for summer months |
| 23 | Free Wi-Fi in Shelter Areas and Eating Area with Food and Beverage Trucks |
| 24 | Soccer fields |
| 25 | Upgrade maintenance of existing opportunities would be sufficient |
| 26 | It would be advantageous to our community if our school could utilize the wonderful opportunities you have made available at our parks. Would like to see more exposure with media about it also. Another thought is a canning co-op. Virginia has one & it seems like such a great idea to do it on a larger scale so more people would consider the opportunity. If you could do it all at one time instead of at home small batch scale, it would be more appealing to people. Too much time & inconvenience in a home scale. Would help our community be more self-sufficient. |
| 27 | I like the sense of remoteness that portions of Riverbend park provides. That being said, I think more trails could be developed to access more areas of the park. There are places that don't have trails that are the most beautiful areas of the park. |
| 28 | Orienteering course |
| 29 | Racquetball or tennis courts |
| 30 | Riverbend has a great place to put in, however unless you have half a day to paddle to the dam, your take out options are next to none. |
| 31 | Orienteering course |

15. Please list below, any recreation, educational programs or special events that you would like to see offered in existing or future Catawba County Parks: (Please pick 2)



| Select two recreation, educational programs or special events that you would like to see offered | | |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Art in the Park Event | 29.9% | 155 |
| Astronomy Events | 28.3% | 147 |
| Environmental/Interpretive Programming | 19.1% | 99 |
| Bird Walks | 24.5% | 127 |
| Bird Banding | 7.9% | 41 |
| Gardening | 20.0% | 104 |
| Historical Events | 27.9% | 145 |
| Musical Events | 49.1% | 255 |
| Outdoor Cooking Classes | 22.2% | 115 |
| Science Programs | 27.7% | 144 |
| Scouting Opportunities | 14.1% | 73 |
| Wellness/Healthy Eating Session | 14.5% | 75 |
| Wellness/Physical Fitness Session | 30.6% | 159 |
| Other (please specify) | 6.7% | 35 |
| answered question | | 519 |
| skipped question | | 136 |

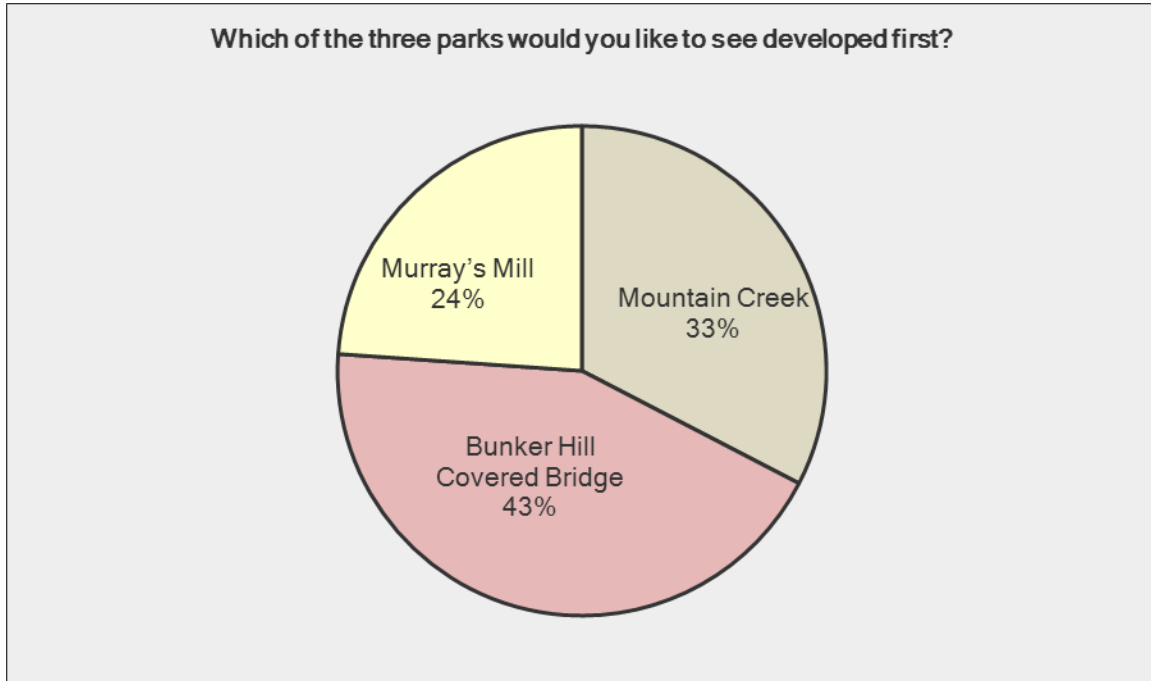
Other comments:

| | |
|----|--|
| 1 | Two favorites – musical events and outdoor cooking classes |
| 2 | Story walks |
| 3 | Night hikes |
| 4 | We go to Art in the Park in Blowing Rock and really enjoy it. |
| 5 | Baseball, softball and soccer field. |
| 6 | Disc golf courses |
| 7 | Disc golf courses |
| 8 | Bike race |
| 9 | Mountain bike race |
| 10 | Would like greenway along Lyle Creek |
| 11 | Horseback riding |
| 12 | Bunker Hill is most endangered and needs protection! |
| 13 | Bicycle/walking trails through the county -Bakers Mtn. needs better ground trails very dangerous at present. |
| 14 | As I said before, just open them. |
| 15 | Other animal detection/traits. |
| 16 | To encourage sand volleyball |
| 17 | Basketball courts |
| 18 | Some gentle outdoor Yoga practices for the middle age groups. |
| 19 | Outdoor lore: way finding, flora and fauna ID, etc. |
| 20 | Kids in Parks would be a great addition. http://kidsinparks.com/ |
| 21 | Wild flower and tree identification |
| 22 | Boat launch |
| 23 | We need a park in the southern end of Catawba |
| 24 | Free Wifi in shelter areas and eating area with food and beverage trucks and swimming classes for all age groups |
| 25 | Mountain view area needs a park. Huffman park is a disgrace and embarrassment to this area. |
| 26 | Outdoor education/wilderness survival/wilderness safety. |
| 27 | Wild edible plants, and an edible mushroom program. |
| 28 | Keep up the great work. A knowledgeable community is a self-sufficient community. Would be great to be a leader in this area. Working together with other resources like churches & local government would be a positive step. We should all pool our resources, ideas, future directions by communicating with each other instead of separate entities. We are one. |

Section 5 Recreation Needs Assessment

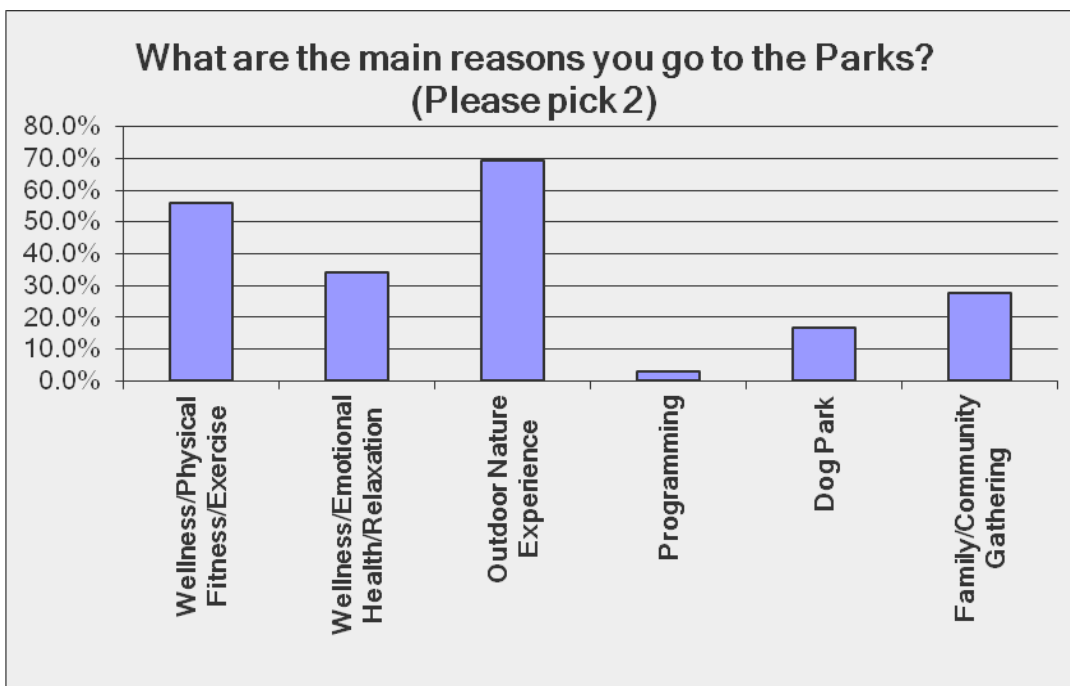
| | |
|----|--|
| 29 | Gardening with natural plants |
| 30 | Wild flower and tree identification walks |
| 31 | Ranger guided walks |
| 32 | Activities geared for children and homeschoolers |
| 33 | Amateur radio communications |
| 34 | Do not want musical events! |
| 35 | Bike outings |

16. The previous Park Plan identifies three future parks (Mountain Creek, Historic Bunker Hill Covered Bridge Park and Historic Murray’s Mill). Which park would you like to see developed first?



| Which of the three parks would you like to see developed first? | | |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Mountain Creek | 32.6% | 165 |
| Bunker Hill Covered Bridge | 43.5% | 220 |
| Murray's Mill | 23.9% | 121 |
| <i>answered question</i> | | 506 |
| <i>skipped question</i> | | 149 |

17. What are the main reasons you go to the Parks? (Please pick 2)



| What are the main reasons you go to the Parks? (Please pick 2) | | |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Wellness/Physical Fitness/Exercise | 55.9% | 306 |
| Wellness/Emotional Health/Relaxation | 34.2% | 187 |
| Outdoor Nature Experience | 69.5% | 380 |
| Programming | 3.1% | 17 |
| Dog Park | 16.6% | 91 |
| Family/Community Gathering | 27.8% | 152 |
| Other (please specify) | | 28 |
| answered question | | 547 |
| skipped question | | 108 |
| skipped question | | 108 |

Other comments:

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | We would be fine with the parks you already have if you would keep them open. |
| 2 | I find it astonishingly inconceivable that one would endeavor to open three new parks when you can't keep the three existing parks open throughout the week. |

Section 5 Recreation Needs Assessment

| | |
|----|--|
| 3 | The future park question seems illogical. If you can't keep the parks you have open then why add more? |
| 4 | We need more days!! There is a group of about 20+ hikers who meet every Wednesday. It is not possible to hike here so we visit other areas |
| 5 | Needs to be open more days. |
| 6 | I wish I could take my classes there but you are closed. It's a shame that Catawba County school teachers have to haul their students to other counties and parks because you are closed. |
| 7 | Bunker Hill Bridge could be much more of a draw for visitors than it currently is. |
| 8 | Playground |
| 9 | Bakers Mtn. trails need grooming/repairing. Roots, rocks and surface is a major trip hazard, compared to state park trails. |
| 10 | Most cities you visit frequently gave 4 ft bicycle/walking trails throughout the city. Hickory needs this to attract young professionals. Look at small cities like Trenton NJ or Topeka, Kansas 30-40 miles of paved trails and parks through the city. We really need safe bicycle trails. |
| 11 | Does not matter which park is developed first. We have great parks and rangers!! |
| 12 | Being outdoors is relaxing |
| 13 | Consider restroom facility at Bakers Mtn. while hiking. |
| 14 | Thanks Catawba county for having the citizen input meetings. Catawba County parks add a lot to our quality of life |
| 15 | Would volunteer at Bakers Mtn. Park |
| 16 | It seems many Catawba County residents do not know about these parks - needs to be advertised |
| 17 | Birding |
| 18 | More hills, cliff trails like just north of Lookout Dam on the lake |
| 19 | We have been to Tanglewood, Latta, Moses (one to ride & usually spend money for food, etc. at destination.) At least have basic hiking/riding (horse) access. |
| 20 | Basketball courts |
| 21 | Water access |
| 22 | Walk my dog on trails |
| 23 | Boat launch |
| 24 | We need a park in the southern end of Catawba |
| 25 | Disc Golf!!! |
| 26 | For children to play |
| 27 | To ride bikes |

18. Would you be interested in volunteering at the Parks? If so please provide your contact information.

Of the 655 people who participated in the survey, 58 respondents indicated they might be willing to volunteer at the parks. Contact information was provided.

5.7 STATE AND NATIONAL ASSESSMENT

Surveys, which are designed to determine the demand for outdoor recreation and facilities, have been conducted on both the federal and state levels – by the President's Commission on Americas Outdoor and the North Carolina Outdoor Recreation Plan, respectively. Significant facts that have evolved from these surveys are:

- The top ten most popular outdoor recreational activities (nationwide)
 1. Picnicking
 2. Driving for pleasure
 3. Swimming
 4. Sightseeing
 5. Walking for pleasure
 6. Playing sports
 7. Fishing
 8. Attending sports events
 9. Boating
 10. Bicycling
- The most rapidly growing outdoor activities (nationwide)
 1. Canoeing
 2. Bicycling
 3. Attending sports events
 4. Camping (all types)
 5. Sailing
 6. Hiking/Backpacking
 7. Walking for pleasure
 8. Water skiing
- The top ten most popular outdoor recreational activities (North Carolina)
 1. Walking for pleasure
 2. Driving for pleasure
 3. Viewing scenery
 4. Beach activities
 5. Visiting historical sites
 6. Swimming (in lakes, rivers, and oceans)
 7. Visiting natural areas
 8. Picnicking
 9. Attending sports events
 10. Visiting zoos
- Local governments (cities and counties) provide 39% of the public recreational opportunities in the United States.

5.8 TYPES OF PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

A comprehensive park system is made up of a variety of park types – ranging from small neighborhood playgrounds to larger parks with athletic fields, playgrounds, a community center and open space. They reflect the differing recreational needs and preferences of diverse users. Park models are used as guidelines for fulfilling the future recreation needs of communities. Not all of these types of parks are the responsibility of the municipal agency; rather, several agencies (federal, state, counties, cities, and/or towns,) play roles in providing recreation opportunities. To further understand the County's role in providing recreation opportunities to its citizens, it is necessary to understand the elements of a comprehensive park system. These types of parks and recreation facilities may or may not be included in comprehensive park systems and are delineated in this Section:

- Regional Parks:
- District Parks:
- Community Parks:
- Neighborhood Parks:
- Mini Parks:
- Linear Parks/Greenways:
- Special Use Facilities: and
- Open Space.

Regional Parks



Regional parks are typically very large sites. On these sites, the unique qualities such as diverse land formations, vegetation and wildlife that exemplify the natural features found are preserved. Parks containing environmental centers, campsites, nature trails, observation decks, and picnic areas are examples of the types of facilities that are usually provided in regional parks. In addition, open fields

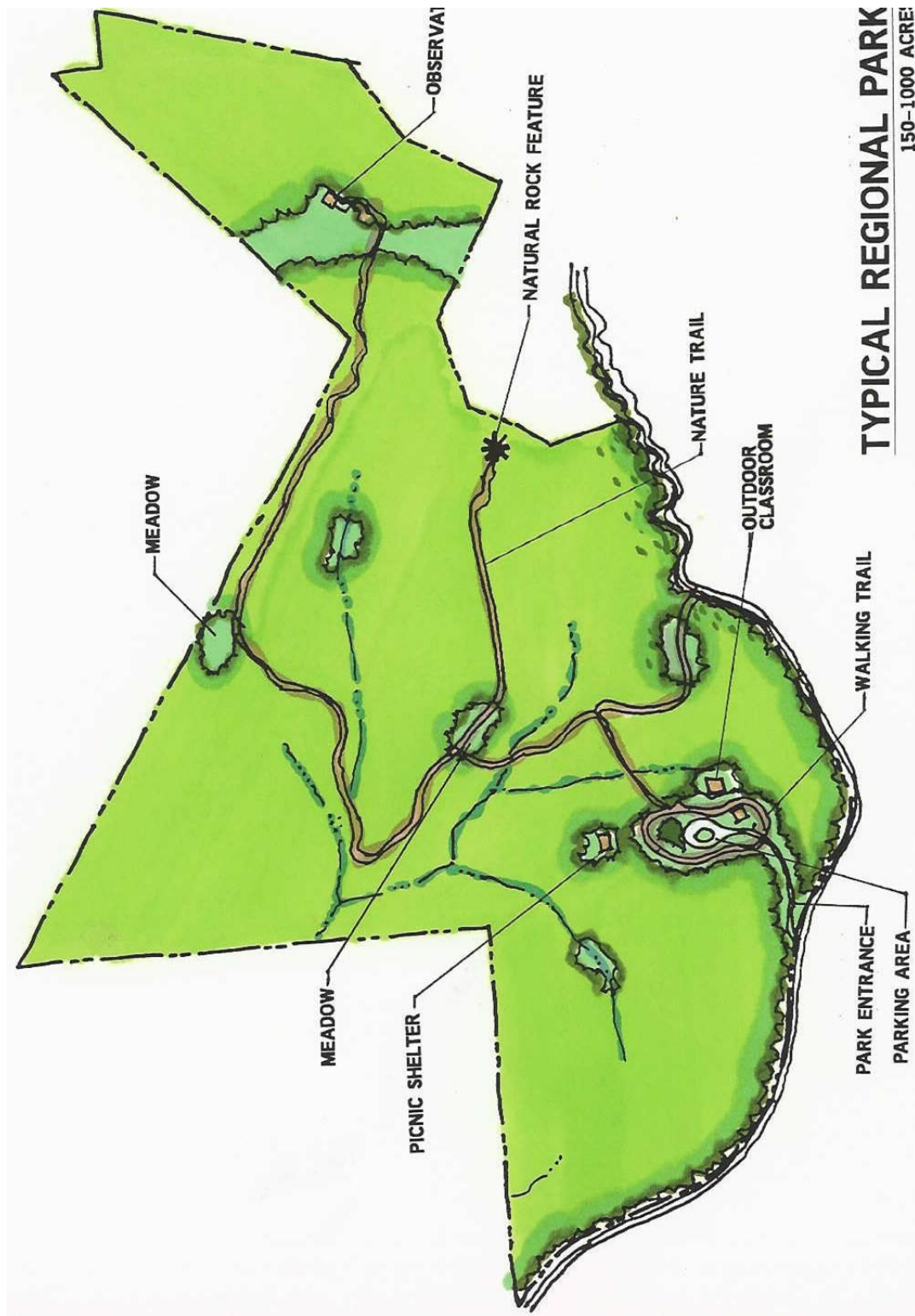
for non-structured activities, such as Frisbee-throwing or kite-flying, are also generally found in these parks.

When land is acquired for the development of regional parks (or the expansion of existing sites), it should be comprised of the previously-mentioned characteristics – accompanied by natural water features such as lakes, rivers, and/or creeks. The majority of the site should be reserved for passive recreation, with the remaining acreage used for active recreation.

The acquisition and development of regional parks are typically undertaken by governing agencies other than local municipalities. Catawba County's Riverbend Park is an excellent example of a regional park.

Specific standards/criteria for developing regional parks are as follows:

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>Service area:</u> | Region-wide |
| <u>Acreage/Population Ratio:</u> | 10 acres per 1,000 persons |
| <u>Minimum Size:</u> | 150-1,000 acres minimum with sufficient area to encompass the resources to be preserved and managed (10% of the site may be developed with facilities found in Community Parks.) |
| <u>Typical Facilities:</u> | Equestrian center Nature trails Primitive camping Group camping Recreational vehicle camping Observation deck Picnic shelters and grills Picnic tables with grills (not under shelter) Beach Swimming Boating Fishing piers/Boat docks Parking Environmental center Restrooms/Vending Caretaker's house |



District Parks

A district park functions as the major source of active recreation for several neighborhoods within a community. District parks are intensely developed – offering a multitude of facilities in order to serve its intended geographic user area. Activities are balanced between active and passive recreation. District parks are typically developed to accommodate athletic league sporting events, as well as tournament competition. Passive recreation opportunities are found in the undisturbed areas, preferably within surrounding buffers. District parks present great opportunities for non-traditional types of recreation.

Sites for district parks should be relatively flat to alleviate excessive grading for active facilities. Where possible, there should be an equal balance of wooded and cleared areas. If a natural water feature is present, the adjoining land should be developed primarily as passive recreation. Accessibility to neighborhoods should be a consideration when choosing sites.

The development of district parks is typically the responsibility of county or municipal agencies. The City of Hickory's Henry Fork River Regional Recreation Park is an example of a district park.

Specific standards/criteria for developing district parks are as follows:

Service Area: 1 to 2 ½ mile radius

Acreage/Population Ratio: 5 acres per 1,000 persons

Desirable Range: 75-200 acres

Desirable Size: +100 acres

Typical Facilities:

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Playgrounds | Full or Half Size Basketball Courts |
| Tennis Courts (lighted) | Baseball/Softball/Multi-Purpose Field |
| Volleyball Courts | Soccer/Football Fields |
| Picnic Shelter with Grill | Nature Trail |
| (with/without shelter) | Benches or Bench Swings |
| Restrooms/Concessions | Parking/Service Yard |
| 50% of Site Remains Undeveloped | |

*Alternate Facilities:

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| Recreation Center | Amphitheatre |
| Observation Decks | Fishing Piers/Boating/Boat Dock |

*Alternate facilities, which adhere to the criteria for district parks, may be added.



Community Parks

Community Parks focus on meeting community-based recreation needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. Compared to district parks, community parks have a smaller range of recreation facilities. They may host athletic league sports events and provide passive recreation. Fifty percent of the community parks should be developed for passive recreation only, these relatively undisturbed areas may serve as buffers around the park and/or act as buffers between active facilities.

Community park sites should have varying topography and vegetation. A variety of tree species should be present in forested areas. Community parks should contain cleared areas for the purpose of locating active recreation facilities. At least one natural water feature (lake, river, and/or creek) is desirable in community parks. The land acquired for use as a community park should be contiguous in nature and strategically located in order to access all users within the community that it serves.

The development of community parks typically falls within the realm of the municipal responsibilities. Though smaller than the typical community park, St. Stephens Community Park is a good example of a community park.

Specific standards/criteria for developing community parks are as follows:

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>Service Area:</u> | 1 to 2 mile radius |
| <u>Acreage/Population Ratio:</u> | 2-5 acres per 1,000 persons |
| <u>Desirable Range:</u> | 15-50 acres |
| <u>Desirable Size:</u> | 25 acres |
| <u>Typical Facilities:</u> | 50% of site to remain undeveloped Nature trails Playgrounds Swimming pool Benches or bench swings Picnic tables/Shelter with/without grills Full size or half size basketball courts Tennis/Volleyball courts Soccer/Multi-purpose fields Restrooms/Concessions/Parking |

*Alternate Facilities:

Recreation center
Amphitheatre
Observation decks
Natural water features
Disc golf

*Alternate facilities, which adhere to the criteria for community parks, may be added.



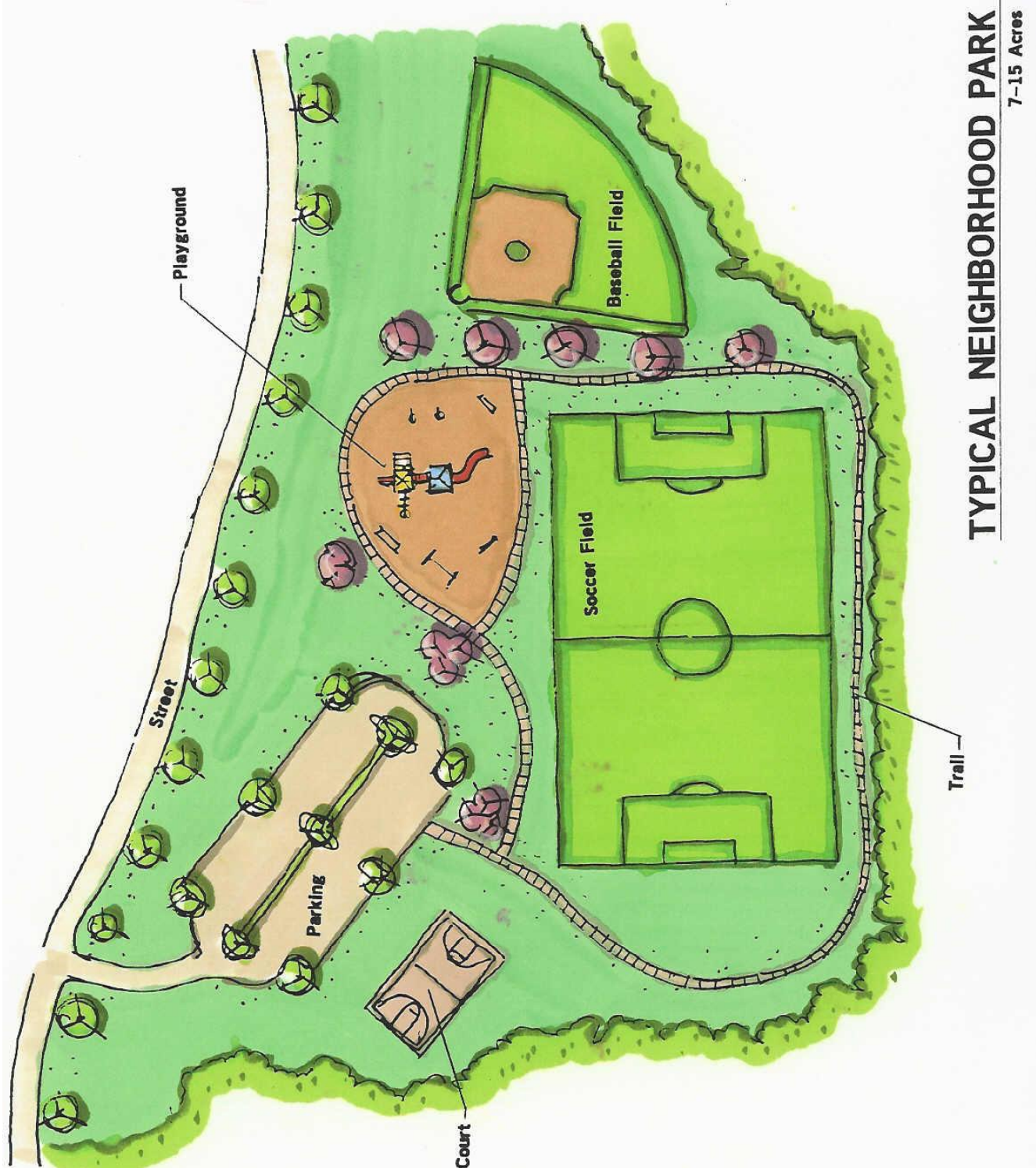
Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks offer the public a convenient source of recreation while serving as the recreational and social focus of neighborhoods. Usually located within walking distance of the area serviced, neighborhood parks provide both active and passive recreation, which is of interest to all age groups. The smaller size of neighborhood parks, as compared to those previously mentioned, requires intense development with fifty percent of each site remaining undisturbed and thereby serving as a buffer between the park and adjacent property owners.

Specific standards/criteria for neighborhood parks are as follows:

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <u>Service Area:</u> | $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 mile radius to serve walk-in |
| <u>Acreage/Population Ratio:</u> | 2 acres per 1,000 persons |
| <u>Desirable Size:</u> | 7-15 acres |
| <u>Typical Facilities:</u> | 50% of site to remain undeveloped Playground Benches or bench swings Softball or baseball field Multi-purpose field Half basketball courts Picnic tables with grills (not under shelter) Picnic shelter with grill |
| <u>*Alternate Facilities:</u> | Tennis courts Nature trails |

*Alternate facilities, which adhere to the criteria for neighborhood parks, may be added.



Mini Parks

The function of a mini park is to provide very limited, isolated, and/or unique recreation needs. Mini parks are the smallest park classification that exists. They are often served by school and church playgrounds. These parks are located within walking distance of the area served, and they provide limited recreation activities. Their very small size requires intense development; and, there is little (or no) buffer between mini parks and adjacent property owners.

At this time, there are no mini parks within the park system.

Specific standards/criteria for mini parks are as follows:

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>Service Area:</u> | ¼ to ½ mile radius to serve walk-in recreation needs of surrounding populations |
| <u>Acreage/Population Ratio:</u> | 0.5 acres per 1,000 persons |
| <u>Desirable Size:</u> | ±1 acre |
| <u>Typical Facilities:</u> | Playground Benches or bench swings Open play area Half basketball courts Picnic tables with grills (not under shelter) |
| <u>*Alternate Facilities:</u> | Tennis courts Nature trails |

*Alternate facilities, which adhere to the criteria for mini parks, may be added.

TYPICAL MINI PARK



Linear Parks/Greenways

A linear park is an area developed for one or more varying modes of recreational travel, such as hiking biking, etc. Linear parks are developed for several reasons, including:

- 1) To “connect” existing recreational facilities;
- 2) To facilitate public right-of-ways; and/or
- 3) To meet public demand.



As such, the length and size of linear parks vary considerably, depending on the terrain of the park land and the distance between entities to be “connected”, such as parks, schools, homes, businesses, and cultural/historical resources. In some cases, a linear park is developed within a large land area designated for protection and management of the natural environment, with recreation opportunities being a secondary objective. The proposed trail improvements at Historic Bunker Hill Covered Bridge are an excellent example and offer a great resource for the County.

Unique or Special Use Facilities

Unique or special use facilities are park types that exist for the sole purpose of enhancing or utilizing a special man-made or natural feature. They can include beaches, parkways, historical sites, sites of archeological significance, swimming pools, conservation easements, flood plains, etc. Minimum standards relating to acreage or population have not been established by the park and recreation industry for this category of park. A size that is sufficient to protect and interpret the resource, while providing optimum use, is considered desirable. Bunker Hill Covered Bridge and Murray’s Mill are Historic Landmarks in the County that are examples of special use facilities.



Open Space

While it is logical to adopt population- based standards for park land, it is not realistic to establish open space standards. The more reasonable method of establishing appropriate standards for open space is to determine the criteria necessary for the protection of significant natural areas.

Public open space is defined as: any land acquired for the purpose of keeping it in a (primarily) undeveloped state. The functions of open space include the

- 1) Preservation of drainage areas for water supplies (watersheds),
- 2) Protection of areas which are particularly well suited for growing crops (farmland preservation),
- 3) Protection of communities to prevent urban sprawl (greenbelts),
- 4) Protection of wildlife habitat (sanctuaries),
- 5) Protection of approach and take-off areas near airports (clear zones),
- 6) Protection of undevelopable land (landfills), and
- 7) Protection of areas aesthetically pleasing for a corridor (viewshed).

While these areas are some of the more common open space functions, many others exist. Catawba County's open space is primarily limited to privately-owned agricultural land and watershed land. Bakers Mountain Park, Riverbend Park, and future Mountain Creek Parkland also provide a great wealth of open space and provide many different functions.

5.9 EVALUATION OF PARK LAND NEEDS

When comparing a park system to national standards, one method is to determine total acreage. The National Recreation and Park Association park land guidelines (in acres) for the total service population of Catawba County are provided in the Table 5.9.1 below. Population figures in this analysis – estimated at 154,358 – include the effective population comprised of County residents. The acreage requirement is based on the population ratio method (acres of park land per population of 1,000) pre-established for each classification of park.

Existing Acreage

Following a summation of park acreage, it has been determined that Catawba County does not meet the national and state acreage guidelines for comprehensive park systems.

| Table 5.9.1 - EXISTING PARK ACREAGE | |
|--|-----------------------|
| Riverbend Park | 450 acres |
| Bakers Mountain Park | 189 acres |
| St. Stephens Community Park | 9.1 acres |
| Mountain View Recreation Center | 5.05 acres |
| Total County Owned Operational Parks: | 653.15 acres * |
| *Note: Land for Mountain Creek Park was obtained for a park along Lake Norman in the southeast area of the County. The park is not operational at this time, but when developed will add 598-acres of recreational opportunities. | |

(See total existing acreage, Table 5.9.1 as compared to total recommended acreage, Table 5.9.2.) Note that the Mountain View Recreation Center is listed in this chart; however, the County does not operate the park, but contracts with the Mountain View Recreation Association to operate the facility. The park classification that most closely matches Catawba County Parks is the Regional Park category. (St. Stephens Community Park does not fit

into this category, but historically, has not been managed by the County.) County passive parks complement the municipal parks which are typically smaller and offer a different type of recreation. The County is the sole provider of regional passive parks for Catawba County residents. In evaluating the park providers within the County, it has been determined that many of the park classifications are not necessary for Catawba County Parks. Specifically, district parks, community parks and neighborhood park needs are predominantly provided by the local municipalities within Catawba County and are commonly focused toward active recreation such as athletic programming.

Table 5.9.2 - COUNTY PARK ACREAGE BY CLASSIFICATION
(Based on NRPA Guidelines)

| TYPE OF PARK | Existing Acreage | Recommended for 2010 Population 154,358 | Recommended for 2025 Population 165,791 |
|---|------------------|---|---|
| REGIONAL PARK (NPS) 1,000 acres or 10 acres/1,000 persons | 639 acres | 1,543 acres (904 acre deficit) * | 1,657 acres (1,017 acre deficit) * |
| DISTRICT PARK 200 acres or 5 acres/1,000 persons | 0 acres | 0 acres | 0 acres |
| COMMUNITY PARK 20-30 acres or 2.5 acres/1,000 persons | 9.1 acres | 0 acres | 0 acres |
| NEIGHBORHOOD PARK 7-15 acres or 2 acres/1,000 persons | 0 acres | 0 acres | 0 acres |
| MINI PARK 1-2 acres or 0.5 acres/1,000 persons | 0 acres | 0 acres | 0 acres |

*Note: After 598-acre Mountain Creek Park is open to the public, the deficit for 2010 will be reduced to 306 acres, and the deficit estimated for 2025 will be reduced to 419 acres for Regional Parks. Catawba County Parks System focuses on Regional Parks—District, Community, Neighborhood and Mini Park needs are primary met by the cities and towns in the County.

5.10 RESULTS OF FACILITY NEEDS STUDY – SUMMARY

The facility needs assessment was based on community input from the public forums and the survey. The public open house forums and surveys revealed the following data and comments:

- Most people come to the parks for the outdoor experience and exercise/wellness opportunities;
- Operate on a six-day week schedule, and be staffed during open hours to enhance both safety and park maintenance. Fewer days of access impedes visitor's daily health hiking routines, the ability of schools to use parks, and loses competitive points under the grant programs. Hikers and dog park patrons appreciate staff for safety reasons;
- Favorite amenities were trails, with canoeing/kayaking, educational events, and picnicking also important;
- Improve existing trails;
- Add more trails;

- Expand park acreage when beneficial to park activities and natural habitats;
- Expand picnic and sitting areas;
- Add primitive camping to one or more parks;
- Add a community meeting/education center at Bakers Mountain and other sites as appropriate;
- Develop an expanded consistent schedule of guided environmental education programs for individuals and families. Invite elementary schools to have a park visit on the curriculum and use parks as outdoor labs for science and history classes;
- Add events featuring music, astronomy, art, and physical fitness sessions in the parks;
- Add mileage markers and identify the difficulty of park trails as severe, moderate, or easy to help the user determine the route that best matches their objective;
- Increase interpretative signage to identify environmental, natural, or historical features;
- Continue to purpose and implement innovative concepts to help the park system provide health, educational, and economic benefits;
- Continue to enhance partnerships, and approach new potential partners to create mutually beneficial outcomes. Ex. CVCC, LR, Science Center, Elementary Schools;
- Bunker Hill was chosen more often as the higher priority in the development of future parks; and
- A park is needed in the southeast area of the County.

A more detailed listing and individual park requests are shown on tables within this Section.

- End of Section -